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360zine

Issue 23 | October 2008

Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...*

FRACTURE

The art of destruction laid bare!



PLUS! FREE INSIDE



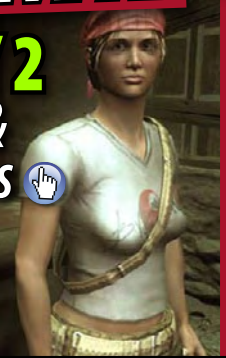
OFFICIAL FABLE 2
SUPPLEMENT

EXCLUSIVE #1

**GEARS
OF WAR 2**
Hands-on preview

EXCLUSIVE #2

FAR CRY 2
*Interview &
new screens*



EXCLUSIVE #3

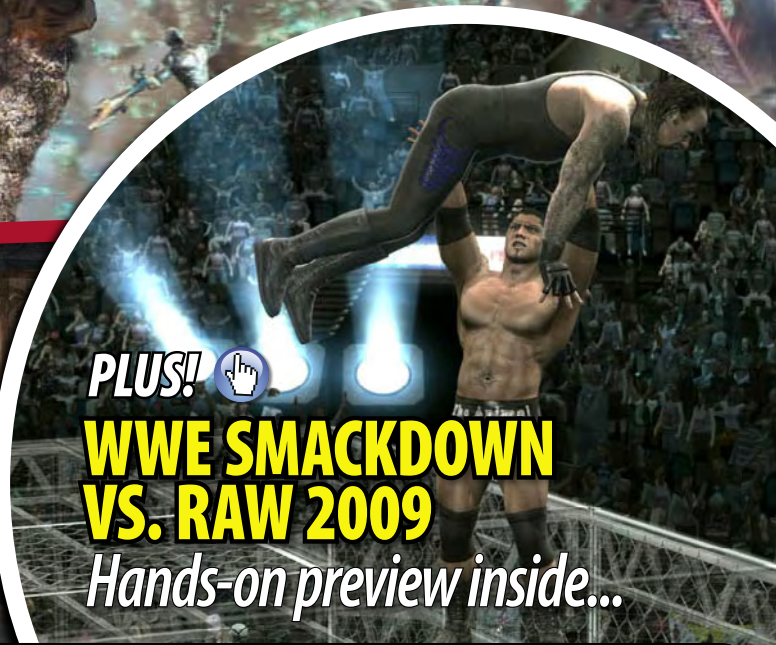
LAST REMNANT
8 Exclusive new screens



PLUS!

**WWE SMACKDOWN
VS. RAW 2009**

Hands-on preview inside...



CONTROL →





Welcome to 360Zine



Hello and welcome to a bumper edition of 360Zine. Everything's starting to heat up and the next few weeks will see a splurge of new Triple-A titles coming to your beloved 360. To whet the appetite we've been hands on with the mighty Gears of War 2 and Guitar Hero World Tour: very different games but both looking utterly brilliant in their own right. We also have **exclusive new screens** for you to gawp at for **Far Cry 2**, **Velvet Assassin** and **The Last Remnant** - don't say we never do anything for you ;-).

It's not all jam tomorrow though and there's plenty to be going on with in the here and now: FIFA 2009 looks like it may finally take the crown from Konami's PES offering. Read the review for EA's outing today, and come back next time to check on Konami....

**360Zine
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
the new issue

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
360zine@gamerzines.com

**MEET THE
TEAM**
Probably the best
games writers on
the planet



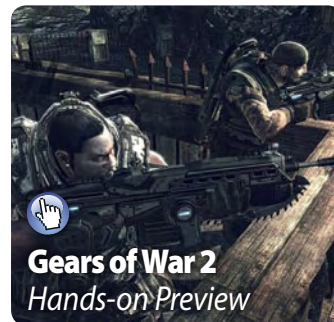
**Chris
Schilling**
Rockin' all over the
world



Steve Hill
Has come all velvety -
in a stealthy kinda
way



Ian Morris
Has been wrestling
with the all-new TNA
iMPACT



Gears of War 2
Hands-on Preview

Don't miss! *This month's top highlights*



Fracture

HANDS-ON PREVIEW



Far Cry 2

Interview and exclusive new screens



FIFA 09

Taking the fight to PES



**Guitar Hero
World Tour**

Totally awesome, man

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

Rise of the Argonauts	Race Pro
Saints Row 2	Far Cry 2
Gears of War 2	Fracture
The Last Remnant	Guitar Hero 4
Golden Axe: Beast Rider	WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009
X-Blades	Velvet Assassin
Operation Flashpoint 2	TNA iMPACT!
Silent Hill: Homecoming	FIFA 09
MK vs DC Universe	Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

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If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.





Publisher: THQ

Developer: Volition Inc.

Heritage: The Punisher,
Saints Row

Link: www.saintsrow.com

ETA: 17th October

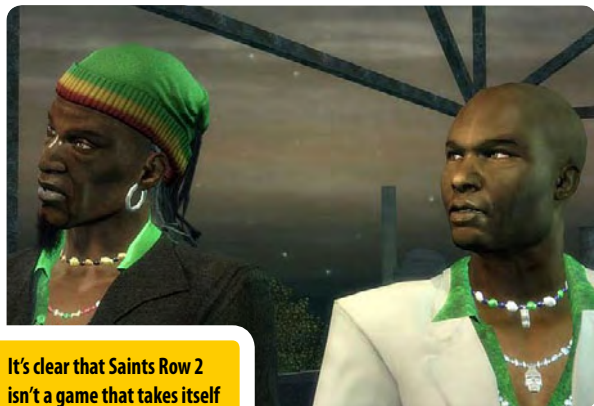


With a collection of larger-than-life characters voiced by popular Hollywood actors, Saints Row will undoubtedly entertain.

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Saints Row 2



While it's light-hearted for the most part, Saints Row 2 does venture into darker territory. Indeed its juxtaposition of comedy with violence makes the latter arguably more shocking.



It's clear that Saints Row 2 isn't a game that takes itself entirely seriously – and is probably all the better for it.



LATEST SCREENS

Saints Row 2

Swearing, shooting and sex - sandbox gaming has never been so sleazy

What's the story?

With GTA taking a more serious, gritty approach, THQ has wisely opted to take a different route with the forthcoming sequel to its underrated 2006 free-roaming crime sim. Expect ridiculously OTT action, enough swearing to make Gordon Ramsay blush, and lashings of sex, gore and politically incorrect humour. In other words, this isn't going to be high art, but it could well be a lot of fun.

What do we know?

There's a seriously impressive voiceover cast – particularly if you happen to be a fan of Joss Whedon's various projects – Buffy regular Eliza Dushku joins Daniel Dae Kim (Angel, Lost) and a host of other familiar TV faces like Michael Rappaport and Jaime Pressly. Thus far, the marketing has positioned the game as a more light-hearted alternative to its more famous rival, and it's a tactic that seems to be paying off. While GTA might offer more depth, this bling 'n' bullets take could offer the same kind of gaming hit as EA's underrated Mercs 2 – but hopefully with fewer glitches.

When do we get more?

We'll bring you our considered verdict in the next issue, as the game is released on 17th October.

Anything else to declare?

The 3rd Street Saints will be battling against three other gangs this time – the Brotherhood of Stilwater, Sons of Samedi, and the powerful Ronin, as well as the ubiquitous Ultor Corporation.



**"THE MOST EXCITING
SHOOTER OF 2008"**

- 360 MAGAZINE -

**"WE KNEW FAR CRY 2 WAS
GOING TO BE FUN, BUT WE
DIDN'T REALISE JUST HOW
MUCH FUN"**

- OFFICIAL 360 MAGAZINE -

**"A BRAVE NEW WORLD .. A
TECHNICAL MIRACLE"**

- XBOX WORLD 360 -

**"MORE THAN
ENOUGH TO
PLEASE ANY
PS3 GAMER
REGARDLESS OF
YOUR TASTE IN
GAMING"**

- PLAY MAGAZINE -

"BY GOD, IT'S INCREDIBLE"

- PC GAMER -

"THE HOTTEST FPS OF 2008"

- TOTAL PC GAMING -

"THE GAME OF THE YEAR"

- PC ZONE -

**"AWASH WITH CLEVER IDEAS
AND SMART TOUCHES"**

- TOTALVIDEOGAMES.COM -

"IT'S AN INSTA-BUY"

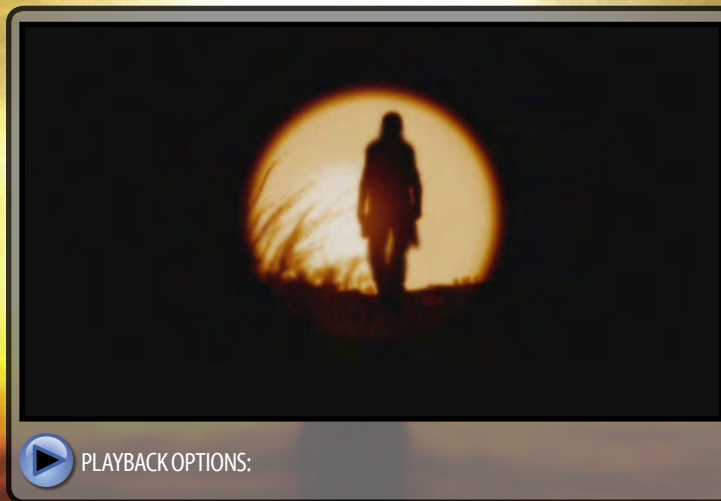
- VIDEOGAMING247.COM -

**"A BEAUTIFUL,
AMBITIOUS
SHOOTER"**

- C&VG -

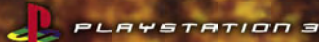
**"FAR CRY 2 WILL
BE A SMASH"**

- PLAYSTATION WORLD -



OCTOBER 24TH

WWW.FARCRYGAME.COM



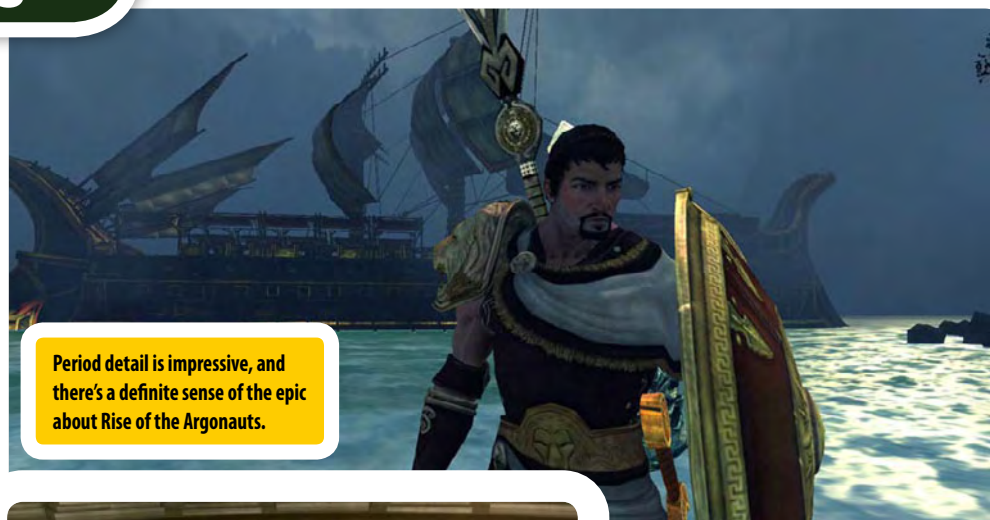
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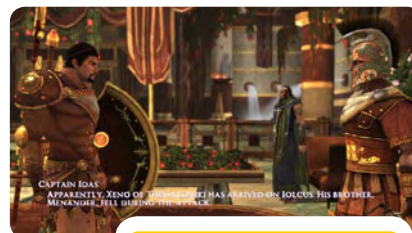
RISE OF THE ARGONAUTS

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Liquid Entertainment
Heritage: Battle Realms, Dragonshard
Link: www.rise-of-the-argonauts.com
ETA: November



Period detail is impressive, and there's a definite sense of the epic about Rise of the Argonauts.

Cutscenes are suitably melodramatic, but while the story's a significant part of the experience, it doesn't dominate the game to Kojima-like levels.



The game's also taken a leaf out of Mass Effect's conversational book, with extensive dialogue options when you chat with other characters.



"Rise of the Argonauts is an action role-player with an emphasis on the former"

FIRST LOOK

Rise of the Argonauts

Fleece a jolly good fellow

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Rise of the Argonauts

What's the story?

If you don't know the story of Jason and the Argonauts, then you mustn't watch any telly over Christmas. It's essentially a series of epic escapades as Jason tries to get his hands on the mythical Golden Fleece, tackling many huge and dangerous beasts along the way. Codies' take on the popular tale is an action RPG, replacing turn-based combat with something a little closer to God of War.

What do we know?

For starters, there's no in-game HUD – players will be able to gauge Jason's condition through visual changes to the character, like his clothes and armour getting tattered, and blood seeping from wounds. There's precious little micro-management, as Codemasters focuses on a more immediate experience – it's an action role-player with an emphasis on the former. Yet the combat is more realistic than hack-and-slash standards – offering one-hit kills should you pierce your opponent's heart, rather than allowing foes to get up from what would ordinarily be life-ending blows. But if you're all about the stat upgrades, then you can improve Jason's abilities – four gods grant him powers according to his popularity with each.

When do we get more?

It's out in November. We should hopefully be getting our hands on the finished game by next month's issue, so expect to hear more then.

Anything else to declare?

It's not just about swords and shields – Jason is granted special God powers which essentially act as the game's magic system, allowing you to unleash super-powerful destructive moves to obliterate assailants.

"THE MOST VISCERAL CALL OF DUTY EVER!"

- Xbox 360 The Official Magazine



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

Available November 2008

CALL OF DUTY WORLD AT WAR

WWW.CALLOFDUTY.COM



PLAYSTATION 3

Games for Windows

XBOX 360

Wii



PlayStation 2

NINTENDO DS

treyarch

ACTIVISION





The Tickers make a flesh-crawlingly creepy clacking noise as they skitter across the floor towards you.

GEARS OF WAR 2

Publisher: Microsoft

Game Studio

Developer: Epic Games

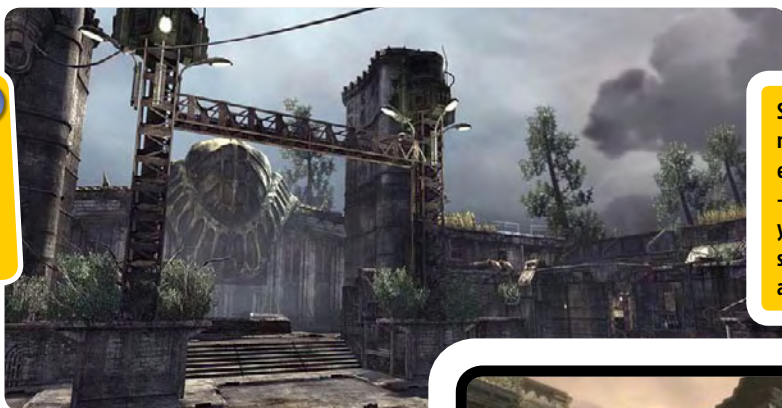
Heritage: Unreal

Tournament III, Gears of War

Link: <http://gearsofwar.xbox.com>

ETA: 7th November

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Gears of War 2



Security is one of the multiplayer stages we experienced in Horde mode – with laser gates that slice you into fleshy pieces should you walk through as they're activated.



River offers some higher ground to defend as you attempt to thin out enemy waves from a distance.



EXCLUSIVE HANDS ON ACCESS

Gears of War 2

It goes all the way to 11...

What's the story?

The Lightmass Bomb hasn't quite done the trick, and humanity is still getting its collective arse kicked by the Locust hordes, with the invaders now beginning to create gigantic, city-swallowing emergence holes. With Jacinto just about the last remaining stronghold, the COG soldiers are once again sent into battle – this time drilling into the earth to take the fight directly to the Locust. Attack being the best form of defence, and all that.

What do we know?

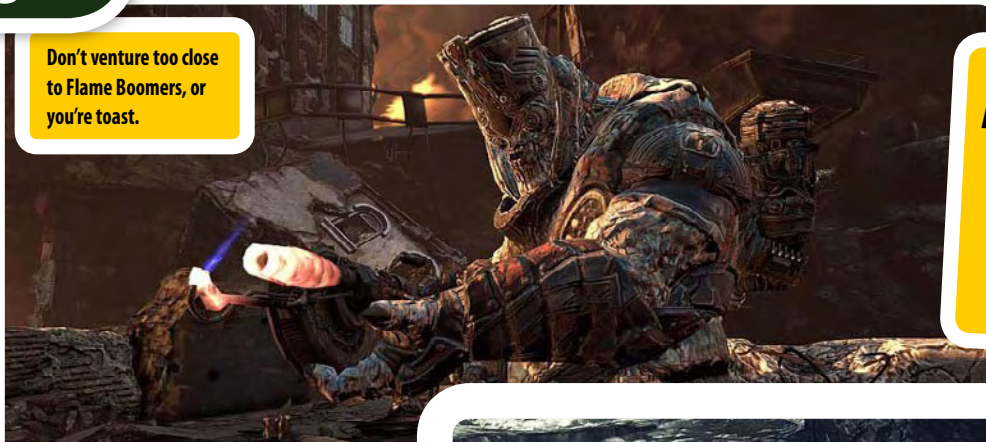
After several hours of hands-on time, both with the first act of the Campaign mode, and several sessions of the mercilessly addictive – and fiercely difficult – new multiplayer mode – which goes by the name of 'Horde' – we can already confidently say that Gears 2 is looking like living up to its billing as one of 2008's biggest games. Those who just wanted more of the same will be in luck, but Epic Games has both refined and expanded the single-player game, creating something which lead designer Cliff Bleszinski describes as both "epic yet more intimate", while adding a few new multiplayer modes to beef up the package yet further.

Bleszinski refuses to give an average completion time for the campaign, but assures us that it is "definitely longer than Gears". As before you'll be playing as Marcus Fenix and his compadre Dominic Santiago – Epic deciding that having more than two players co-operating would have compromised the story. As the game begins, Dom's wife Maria is missing, and it seems his search for her plays an important part in the plot.

The cover system has been tweaked slightly, and there's also an alternate control scheme similar to PS3 title Uncharted – with evade and cover commands on different buttons. There's a new big baddie named

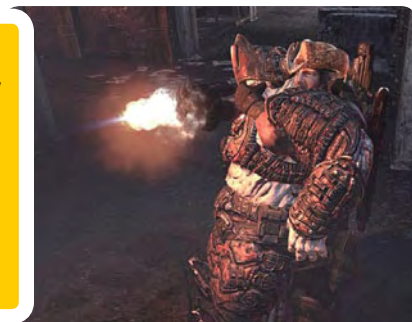


Don't venture too close to Flame Boomers, or you're toast.



"The multiplayer Horde mode – five players against large waves of enemies – is set to be an online favourite"

Find a downed enemy crawling, and you can kerb-stomp them, punch them in the head, or drag their body to use as a shield.



The new Locust sinkholes can swallow up entire cities – which forces the humans to go on the offensive before they're wiped out for good.



The Cole Train returns, pictured here alongside newcomer Dizzy, who is conscripted under the Operation Lifeboat scheme – his family is provided with supplies while he fights.



> Gears of War 2 continued

Skorge, an agile yet incredibly powerful opponent who wields a staff with a chainsaw at each end – Bleszinski uses an interesting analogy when comparing him to the first game's boss – "if RAAM was a sledgehammer, then Skorge is like a scalpel or a samurai sword".

As for the first act of the game itself, you'll start by visiting a dilapidated hospital, meet two new team members – rookie Carmine and huge, tattooed Maori Tai

– and fight against Reavers, squid-like creatures not a million miles away from the Sentinels in the Matrix films. One thrilling vehicle sequence sees you travelling on a gigantic transport rig and escorting the assault derricks to their drilling position – manning a chain gun, you have to shoot down incoming mortars, blast Brumaks and even a Corpser or two. And then the Tickers – suicidal critters who scuttle towards you before detonating – are introduced, with a later tunnel section lit up by the rig's beams, feeling similar to the night-vision scene in the film Cloverfield.

When do we get more?

We'll be bringing you much more exclusive coverage of Gears 2 with a special edition Zine...

Anything else to declare?

The multiplayer Horde mode – five players team up against increasingly large waves of enemies – is set to be an online favourite. And with 50 waves (we barely scraped over level 10), it'll also be a lasting challenge.





HIGH IMPACT DOUBLE TEAM MOVES



NEW CREATE A FINISHER



NEW INFERNO MATCH



ROAD TO WRESTLEMANIA CO-OP

TAG TEAMS EXPLODE ONTO WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2009...
IT'S JUST YOU AND YOUR PARTNER, BACK-TO-BACK
AND READY TO FACE THE ONSLAUGHT.



ALONE, YOU'RE GREAT.
TOGETHER YOU'RE UNSTOPPABLE



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



PSP

XBOX 360 LIVE

PlayStation 2

PLAYSTATION 3

NINTENDO DS

Wii



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Publisher: Square-Enix
Developer: Square-Enix
Heritage: Final Fantasy, The World Ends With You
Link: <http://na.square-enix.com/remnant>
ETA: Winter 2008

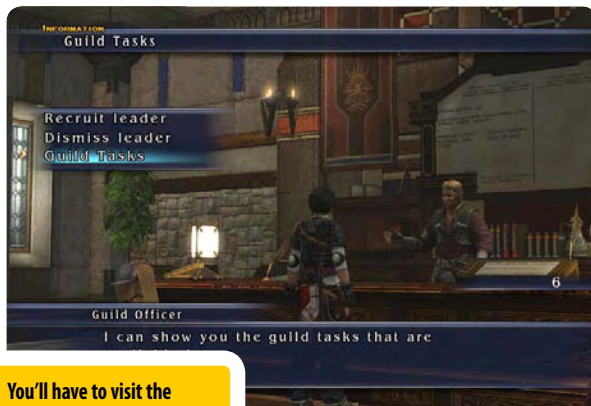


There's a slight medieval feel to the game's cities – though we're not sure huge fish-people were around in medieval times.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of The Last Remnant



You'll encounter plenty of merchants in Balterossa. So if you're low on supplies, that's the place to shop.



You'll have to visit the town guild to embark on one of the game's missions.



8 WORLD EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

The Last Remnant

Square-Enix reinvents the epic

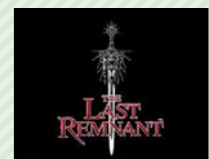
What's the story?

Four races live in an ancient world – the human-like Mitra, the huge, fishy Yama, four-armed feline Sovani and the frog-esque Qsiti. An 18-year-old Mitra named Rush has his idyllic life disrupted when his younger sister is kidnapped by a strange group of soldiers. Naturally, as all good protagonists do, he sets off after her, venturing into a world divided by the mysterious Remnants – strange objects fought over for their immense power. Square-Enix's first major in-house current-generation title (Infinite Undiscovery was developed at tri-Ace) is a lavish production – and a timed exclusive on Xbox 360, hitting the console late this year long before it reaches the PS3 in 2009.

What do we know?

Captured siblings and mysterious powerful artifacts – it's no surprise to discover we're back in J-RPG territory. But this is a format that Square-Enix knows very well, and regardless of whether its concept is familiar or not, The Last Remnant looks

like it could match up to the very best role-players on the 360. Nominal hero Rush is joined by the four Generals of Athlum – each from one of the world's four races – and this team-based ethic is adopted by the game's battle system. Random encounters are well and truly out – the field screen shows enemies, who can be given a wide berth if you wish to avoid a scrap, which is something we're very pleased about. Engage in combat, and you'll give out very specific commands to your 'unions' – rather than simple choices of Attack, Defend and Magic, you'll be able to instruct your comrades to go on an all-out offensive, or to adopt an attacking stance while remaining watchful of their health. It's a system which seems a little more strategic than your usual turn-based fighting mechanic, though battle



It's a Square-Enix developed title, so you can expect high production values.

"The game uses the Unreal 3 Engine, and its battle sequences can see you tackling up to 70 enemies at once"

> The Last Remnant continued

conditions are in constant flux – allowing you to adjust your approach at times, but also forcing you to change tactics when you're restricted from barking out certain orders. Oh, and be sure to keep your team's morale high – it affords you more battle commands and increases the potency of your attacks. Besides the scrapping you'll also obviously do plenty of exploring too, visiting some truly

stunning locations and getting your hands on some of these legendary Remnants, which can take many different forms – ranging from creatures to gems and weapons. Battle system aside, this is definitely well-trodden ground, but if anyone knows how to get the most from these genre traditions, it's Square-Enix.

When do we get more?

It's due for a simultaneous worldwide release in November, though only the US and Japanese launches have been confirmed for the 20th. Still, expect it in Europe shortly afterwards – don't expect a demo, though.

Anything else to declare?

The game uses the Unreal 3 Engine throughout, and its battle sequences can see you tackling up to 70 enemies at once. And our old favourite, the Quick Time Event, makes a return – certain encounters require timed button presses for special moves and finishing off opponents. – and as long as they're not overused, then we're happy to see them.

The women, as ever, are a bit underdressed, though not quite to the extent of the cleavage-filled Lost Odyssey.



The Remnant's seal is broken!
You are buffeted by a wave of dark energy!

Each city has its own remnant which is worshipped by its residents.



INFORMATION
Melphina - Melphina Castle

Roberto
If I may ask you something...
Have you ever questioned your exi

Slow-burn plotting, township exploration and NPC chats are familiar parts of the J-RPG template.

EXCLUSIVE SCREENSAVER





Microsoft
game studios



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

*For every choice, a different destiny.
Who will you become?*

Tragedy has brought you to a crossroads, and now you must choose.

Revenge or acceptance? Justice or retribution? But choose wisely.

The paths are many, their consequences severe.

And the future of Albion is in your hands.

Available 24 October 2008. xbox.com/fable2

FABLE II

Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE



CONTROL →



INCOMING

A fistful of top new titles coming to 360...



Golden Axe: Beast Rider

Publisher: Sega | **ETA:** 17th October

Sega's remake of its ancient side-scrolling brawler has been put back a few weeks, missing its planned September release. This time it's in full 3D and is a solo affair, as female warrior Tyrus Flare attempts to avenge her tribe, in a storyline which takes place before the 'events' of the first game.



Silent Hill Homecoming

Publisher: Konami | **ETA:** November

Another slight delay for Konami's survival horror, making its current-gen debut this November. It's been left to Western developer Double Helix to attempt a series reinvention, although with the appearance of franchise icon Pyramid Head, it's a game that certainly pays homage to its past.



X-Blades

Publisher: Southpeak Games | **ETA:** 31st October

Fledgling developer Gaijin Entertainment is behind this gaudy third-person actioner, whose heroine Ayumi pretty much redefines the term 'scantily clad' as she's barely wearing anything at all. Yet while we would successfully argue that she's a little underdressed for beast slaying, her powerful twin swords can make mincemeat out of most monsters in no time.

Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising

Publisher: Codemasters | **ETA:** 2009

The sequel to Codemasters' ultra-realistic military combat simulator isn't too far away now, though you'll still have to wait until next year for another dose of tactical action, as the series makes its debut on 360. Taking you through Southeast Asia, Central Europe and Africa, Flashpoint 2 should provide plenty of satisfyingly deep strategic warfare.



Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe

Publisher: Midway | **ETA:** 21st November

The final character roster has been revealed for Midway's franchise head-to-head, with 11 fighters per side battling it out for supremacy. Lex Luthor and Darkseid are the final two DC villains, while Baraka and Shao Kahn return for the Kombatants. Not sure about the inclusion of The Flash – won't he be a little too quick for everyone?



Race Pro

Publisher: Atari | **ETA:** January 2009

This incredibly detailed sim has been nudged back to January of next year, presumably to allow ace race developer SimBin to polish and fine-tune its mechanics to perfection. SimBin's previous PC-only racers have been a sim fan's dream, so casuals need not apply when Race Pro rolls onto the starting grid in a few months' time.

UPCOMING

NOVEMBER

- Fable 2 – 24th October
- Mirror's Edge – 14th November

DECEMBER

- Damnation – 5th December
- Banjo Kazooie Nuts N Bolts – Christmas

FEBRUARY

- The Wheelman – February
- This Is Vegas – February

MARCH

- Resident Evil 5 – 13th March
- Tom Clancy's HAWX – Q1 2009



FRAC^{TURE}



**RESHAPE THE BATTLEFIELD.
RESHAPE THE BATTLE.**



OCTOBER 10TH 2008

www.FractureGame.co.uk



PLAYSTATION 3



DAY 1: STUDIOS™



LUCASARTS



CONTROL →



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5 WORLD EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

FAR CRY 2

Ubisoft's Africa-set open world shooter is almost upon us. We spoke to Ubisoft's Montreal team to find out what makes it tick and what they've been able to include to make it stand out...

This is one of your Buddies – they'll back you up in a firefight, and sometimes come to your rescue if you're shot.



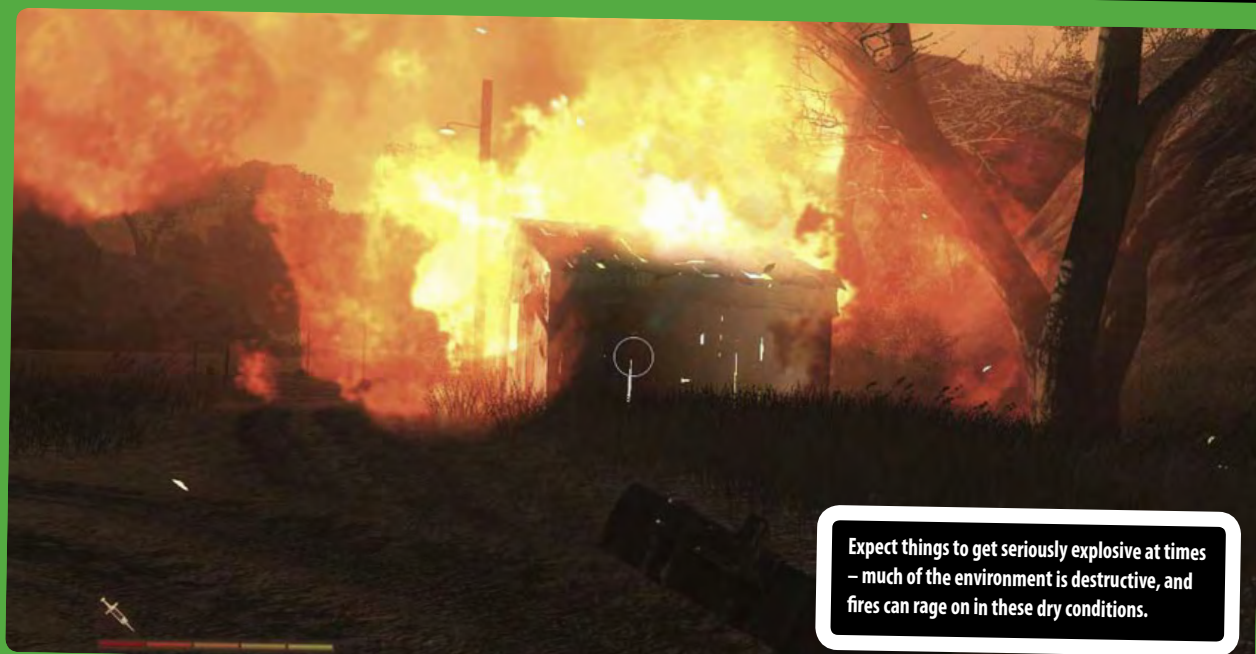
ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE

Africa is a very unusual setting for a first-person shooter. What was the thinking behind that?

The idea of Far Cry as a brand is that we need to take players to somewhere they have never seen before, somewhere exotic and beautiful, but also somewhere filled with dread and anticipation. Unfortunately, the tropical jungles of the videogame world are increasingly populated with tourists... you've been in tropical jungles from the original Far Cry to its console ports, from Just Cause to Boiling Point to Mercenaries 2. The tropical jungle is not exotic for gamers any more. To truly deserve to be called Far

Cry 2, we needed to recapture that fresh feeling of exoticism and danger... and Africa fit the bill perfectly.

The game seems to have remarkable depth, certainly compared to other titles in the genre. Has it been difficult to



Expect things to get seriously explosive at times – much of the environment is destructive, and fires can rage on in these dry conditions.



Certain areas have ceasefire zones, so you'll have to lower your weapon if you want to avoid trouble.



Press the left bumper and you'll administer an injection which will allow you to regain any health lost.

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



The dynamic day-night cycle makes for some visually delightful moments. Sunrise and sunset are particularly gorgeous.



Far Cry 2 takes the belts and braces ethos very literally, even including khaki guns, just in case the normal black is passé.

360Zine

EXCLUSIVE
DESKTOPS

Click on an icon to save the image to your PC for use as a desktop background.

> Interview continued

keep things accessible while retaining the complexity?

Absolutely. That's why we spent three-and-a-half years working on it! Seriously though, it's an important question. Shooter players tend to be mostly content following the breadcrumbs through the corridors to the end... we wanted to make a shooter than maintained the simple, accessible controls of the top shooters available, like CoD4 and Halo, but also offered the kind of open-ended adventure and exploration types of play you'd see in the best open world games, like GTA, Zelda or Oblivion. The challenge was enormous, but in the end we think we struck a balance that allows exploratory players a beautiful open world full of things to do and find, and also gives hardcore shooter fans the intense action and tight gameplay they are looking for.

The game offers a very open-ended approach, with multiple solutions to problems. Do you think this is the future of first-person shooters?

It's hard to say. This is the kind of game we like, and players seem to like it too, but there are also a lot of players who really only want to play connect the dots in terms of navigating the world of a shooter. They want to follow a prescribed path and have a story told to them. Our hope is that once they get a taste of what it means to drive their own story, they will not want to go back, but there's no accounting for taste.

The map editor is an amazing addition. Did the decision to include that come late in the day, or was it always planned from the start of development?

We planned it from the start. As we move deeper into this generation of hardware (both console hardware and the ubiquity of high-speed connections and powerful multi-core machines in the PC world) we see that user-generated, and user-evaluated content is an incredibly important tool for extending the value and life of a game. We always knew we wanted to have a great level editor, and to be completely honest, it has exceeded even our best hopes for what it could be.

Finally, what single element of the game are you most proud of?

Probably [your character's relationship] with the Buddy characters. The first time I had a Buddy die in my arms was very meaningful to me. It was a tremendous amount of time and energy and effort expended just to get to the point where it could be experienced legitimately in context for the first time. Had it not worked as we'd hoped then we wouldn't have had time to fix it, so the fact that we pulled it off makes me very happy. ●

Don't miss 360Zine's definitive review of Far Cry 2 in next month's issue...

FARCRY2

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Heritage: Far Cry, Assassin's Creed, Prince of Persia
Link: <http://farcry.uk.ubi.com>
ETA: 24th October



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COMING AUTUMN 2008

*Additional faceplates sold separately **Some features may be limited in the Wii™ and PlayStation®2 Guitar Hero World Tour games



PlayStation 2

PLAYSTATION 3

XBOX 360 LIVE

Wii

NINTENDO DS

VICARIOUS VISIONS

UOGAT

redoctane

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CONTROL →





HANDS ON

Fracture

Truly groundbreaking, or nothing but rubble?

It's fair to say that Fracture has a genuinely inventive – and exciting – idea at its very core. The idea of terrain deformation has been explored before, but to create it in realtime with your own weapon? That's something else. It's almost certainly something that wouldn't have been possible on the last generation of consoles, and LucasArts and developer Day 1 Studios are determined to make the most of it.

Making the earth move

Your weapon is able to raise and lower sections of earth with the bumper buttons, and is used mainly to solve puzzles of a sort – you'll lower the earth to pass through previously blocked tunnels, or hop onto self-created mounds to leap over walls. It's also used for destructive purposes, though most often it's your spike grenades that will do that – sending towering columns sprouting from the ground to tip platforms or deactivate electrical devices, or even connecting conduits in a rare case of reparation over destruction. It's clever stuff.

You can even use it against your enemies – it's essential as a tool for

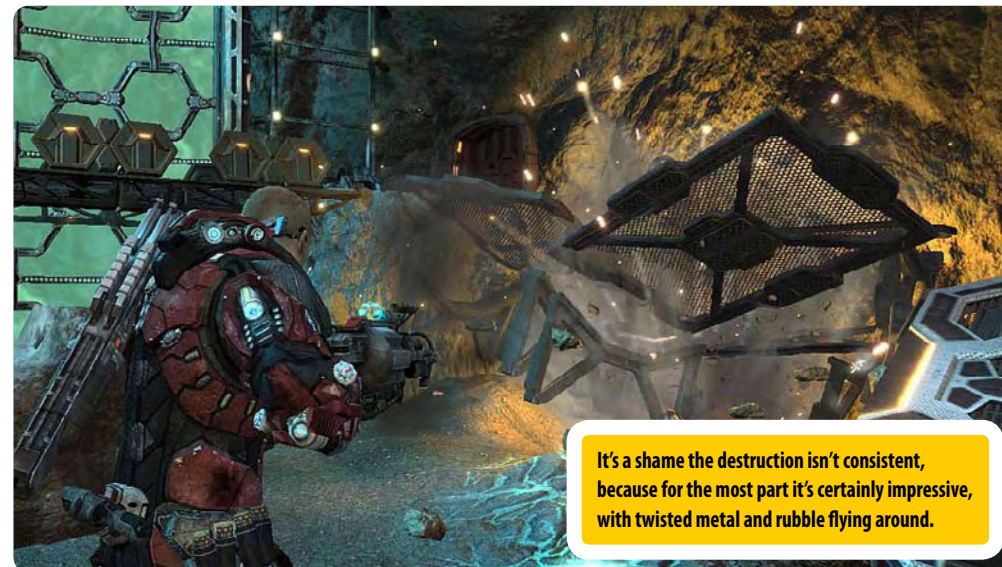
"Fracture has a genuinely inventive – and exciting – idea at its very core"



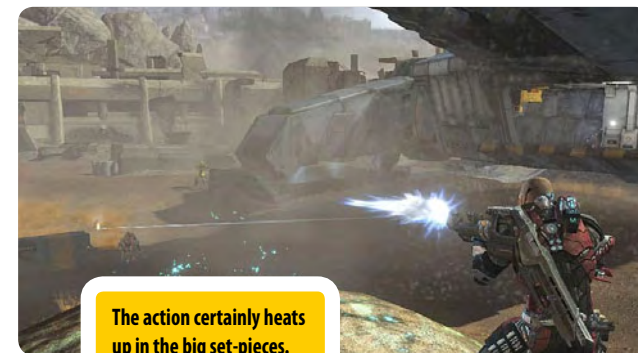
Use a spike grenade and you can create a column to reach higher ground.

providing cover, given how many opponents you'll come up against. And if you're running low on ammo, or in need of a reload, then a quick blast can send enemies tumbling long enough for you to draw a bead on them and fire before they're back on their feet.

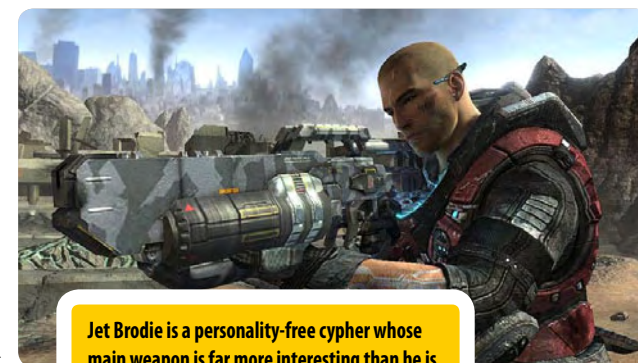
So far so good, then? Well, not quite. Because Fracture is a game of two halves – the split logo is ominously representative of the game as a whole. Firstly, you've got this incredible plaything, but the game's a little too exacting as to how you use it. You



It's a shame the destruction isn't consistent, because for the most part it's certainly impressive, with twisted metal and rubble flying around.



The action certainly heats up in the big set-pieces.



Jet Brodie is a personality-free cypher whose main weapon is far more interesting than he is.



The Pacificans are all genetically modified – you'll occasionally come across Elite soldiers who move incredibly fast and are hard to hit.



"When it does get thrillingly frenetic you'll forgive most of its sins"

If you're under heavy fire, or your shield is getting low, then it's a good idea to create your own cover, and crouch behind it for a while to recharge.



> Fracture continued

might think you've happened across a clever method of reaching a higher area, but if it's not the way the game wants you to go, then you could well find yourself leaping into one of many

invisible walls. Similarly, when you're trying to get creative in combat, you'll sometimes find your grenades or terrain blasts just fail to go off, because they're too close to a structure, or your existing pile of earth is too high. Occasionally, the platforming can get a



little fiddly too, while a couple of puzzles require near-pinpoint precision blasting. Get it wrong, and you can spend a significant amount of time trying to right things – there's one early puzzle in the game which involves you guiding four explosive balls to destroy four objects in the same room, and it's an exercise in frustration.

Generic art

And then you have the art design, which is an insult to the word 'generic'. It all looks sharp enough and moves extremely well, but the character and enemy design is either completely forgettable or laughably clichéd. Your focus-tested protagonist is a shaven-headed, facially-scarred space marine named Jet Brodie. Enemies are worryingly bland drones. Environments are full of dull, grey metal structures,

explosives and crates. If it weren't for the terrain deformation you really could be playing any third-person shooter from the last few years.

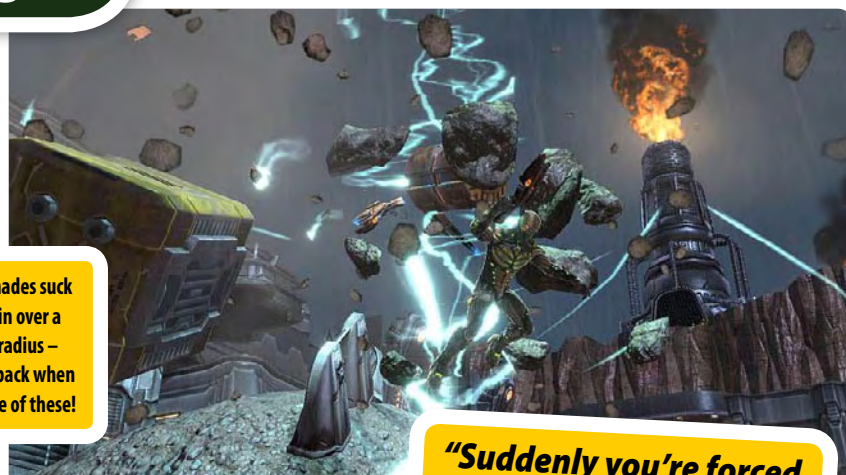
Yet when it all gets thrillingly frenetic – and it does, and often – you'll forgive Fracture most of its sins. Because the chaotic nature of its feature weapon, its too-busy environments and its ridiculous number of enemies suddenly all makes sense. It's a game which is essentially about creating absolute havoc and blowing shit up. When you arrive at the stage where you send explosive balls tumbling with a judiciously placed crater, sending groups of enemies cascading lifelessly through the air, it's nothing less than a huge amount of fun.

Another inspired decision raises the stakes further – Fracture introduces a new weapon and new enemies just as





Vortex grenades suck opponents in over a fairly wide radius – stand well back when you hurl one of these!



"Suddenly you're forced to deal with a brand new threat in new and inventive ways"



Fracture's a refreshingly difficult game at times – you'll really need to tread carefully, even with a regenerative shield.

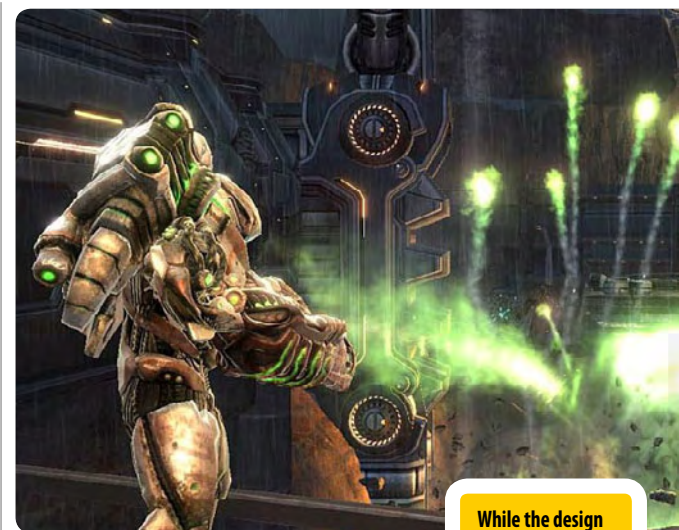
> Fracture continued

things are edging towards repetition and tedium is about to set in. Suddenly you're forced to deal with a brand new threat in new and inventive ways, and the combat becomes a puzzle element in itself. Though the objectives remain roughly the same throughout, the way that you go about them is different enough to feel like it's a genuine progression in the gameplay.

Neat twists

Fracture also promises to offer a few neat twists in its multiplayer – while it remains to be seen how well it holds up with 12 players simultaneously making mountains and molehills online, we feel like there's the very real prospect of a strategic yet chaotic cult classic in the making here.

Ultimately, you can't help but feel slightly disappointed that LucasArts or Day 1 didn't have the courage to take a few more risks and offer something that's truly out of the ordinary. Because unfortunately 'ordinary' is a word that describes half of Fracture extremely well. Stick the prefix 'extra' on the front, and you're closer to how the game feels when at its very best. At the moment, this mix of the hackneyed



While the design isn't to our tastes, Fracture is a technically sound game, with plenty of particle effects and nice big character models.

and the inspiring makes Fracture a solid game that might well benefit from a sequel with the balls to make good on the promise shown here. If you come back next month though, then we'll bring you the full and definite review. ●

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think
of Fracture



360Zine



HOW COMPLETE?

95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

75%

A schizophrenic experience



Saints Row 2



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PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

18



PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360 LIVE



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CONTROL →





Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Tony Hawk series, Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock
Link: www.guitarhero.com
ETA: 7th November

HANDS ON

Guitar Hero: World Tour

Live on stage with Activision's smash hit

Camden's Electric Ballroom has never seen anything like it. Four games journalists on stage, collectively performing the worst version of Sweet Home Alabama you've ever heard. Lynyrd Skynyrd would be cringing. Hell, even Kid Rock would be embarrassed. More importantly, we're all having a whale of a time making this racket. Anyone unconvinced about music games clearly hasn't played them in the right environment – because, pumped through the huge speakers on the Ballroom's stage, it makes us all feel as close to rockstars as most of us are ever likely to get.

As we suggested last month, Guitar Hero World Tour is looking like being the music game to beat this year. Rock Band has had its time in the sun, and now Activision has put its towel down on Harmonix's lounge in true Teutonic fashion. It's taken several hours of on-stage hands-on time, but now we're fully convinced of its genius.



If you prefer, your entire band can record a song 'live' for later tweaking in the studio.

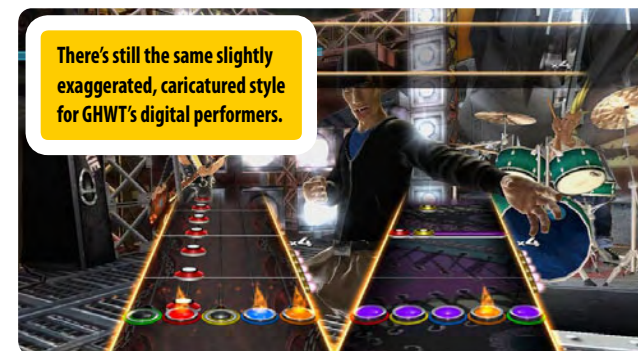
Let's start with the drumkit, which is so much better than Rock Band's peripheral it's almost embarrassing. The clattering noise that forced many budding Keith Moons to turn up the volume on their tellies to ear-bleeding levels is replaced by a faint thudding from the rubber pads – enough so you

can hear what you're doing, but not so that it detracts or distracts from what's blasting out of your speaker set-up. It's a sturdy bit of kit, too – enough to withstand some frenzied whacking, and the spring of the rubber allows your sticks to bounce back more easily, making rapid-fire rolls much



Singing (on Medium at least) seemed to be very forgiving – badly played instruments are far more likely to fail than out-of-tune vocalists.

"Guitar Hero World Tour is looking like being the music game to beat this year"



There's still the same slightly exaggerated, caricatured style for GHWT's digital performers.



If you've played Rock Band, it takes a little rewiring of the brain before you can master the drums – but having raised cymbals makes the kit feel more authentic.



"The special music studio allows players to create their own tunes"



The customisation options are representative of the incredible number of ways to adjust your play experience.

> Guitar Hero: World Tour continued

easier. As it turns out, you'll only really notice the velocity-sensitive nature of the pads during fills – the game keeps

the noise at a steady level, only allowing your blows to be heard at full volume when you're freeforming.

More hands-on time with the guitar reveals it to be a chunkier, meatier proposition than Rock Band's flimsy, anaemic Stratocaster. There's a



We'd personally have changed the shape of the cymbal notes to make the transition easier, though you'll soon be hitting the right pads without even thinking.

refreshing weight to it, and while the strum bar's still perhaps a little too clicky for our liking, it's otherwise vastly improved. There's even a separate button for Star Power just to the right of the strum bar, so if you're not a fan of tilting – perhaps it puts you off your timing – you can access it digitally.

Forming a queue

There's another great feature we've not mentioned so far, which is a real why-didn't-I-think-of-that? idea – you can now cue up several tunes to play in a row in Quick Play mode – allowing you to play a full gig of songs of your own choice. It's perfect if you're playing locally with a group of people, and the downtime in-between is both long enough to give you a quick breather and short enough that you're not waiting ages for the next song to start.

And there are 85 of those to choose from, with a host of secret tracks to be unlocked too – some of these aren't necessarily suitable for band play, which is why they're not officially listed. But we're promised there will be some real treats in there for dedicated players who spend long enough with the already huge setlist. It's also easier to jump back in should one of your band disconnect their instrument or pause the game for a loo break – you'll get an audible countdown with three clicks from a set of drumsticks before plunging back into a song.

Meanwhile, we're treated to a demo of the recording studio's capabilities – there are a bewildering number of presets to change the sound of your instruments. We particularly liked the 80s-style 'Electro' setting for the drums, which we imagine will be of interest to





It's always the classic rock tracks that seem the most satisfying to play – technical trickery is one thing, but there's nothing quite like blasting out a simple rock riff.

"At £150 for full package it's not cheap, but it is better value than Rock Band and the instruments should have greater longevity too"



The full band kit in all its glory. Pre-order online now and you can get the full set and a free additional guitar for £150. Rarely has something so expensive actually been quite such a bargain.



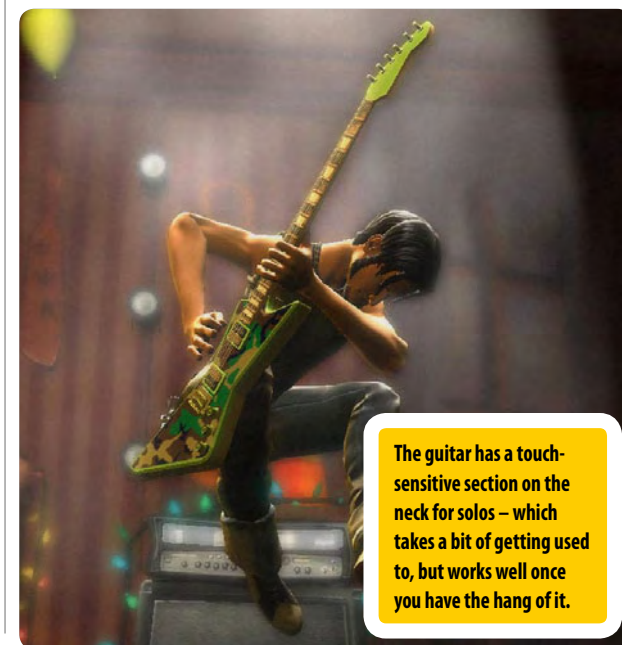
**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
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tell us what
you think of
Guitar Hero:
World Tour

> Guitar Hero: World Tour continued

Pete Waterman. Here, you're able to record as you play, or simply add the notes in at the time required. A mixture of the two seems to work best – play the notes you want, and then tweak the timing and pitch where necessary in the studio afterwards. We'd be surprised if you don't find the exact sound you want, as there are so many settings to choose from. You'll also be able to provide synth/keyboard backing for your tracks, though it doesn't seem that you can play those sections with another instrument. Compatibility with a future Keyboard Hero perhaps? We can but dream.

Our fears about potentially weak note charts were pretty much quelled during our time with the game. Sure, we didn't get the chance to experience every track with every instrument on every difficulty, but those we played – ranging from Hotel California to Some Might Say – seemed just about spot-on to us. At £150 for the full package (including a free guitar if you preorder) it's not cheap, but it is better value than Rock Band, and has potentially greater longevity too – certainly as far as the instruments are concerned. ●

The studio will be the most important addition for creative types, but the best tracks will be available to download.



The guitar has a touch-sensitive section on the neck for solos – which takes a bit of getting used to, but works well once you have the hang of it.



HOW COMPLETE?

95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

92%

We want to rock and roll all night (and every day)





HANDS ON

WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009

Suffering from a ring of fire? Then this is the game for you

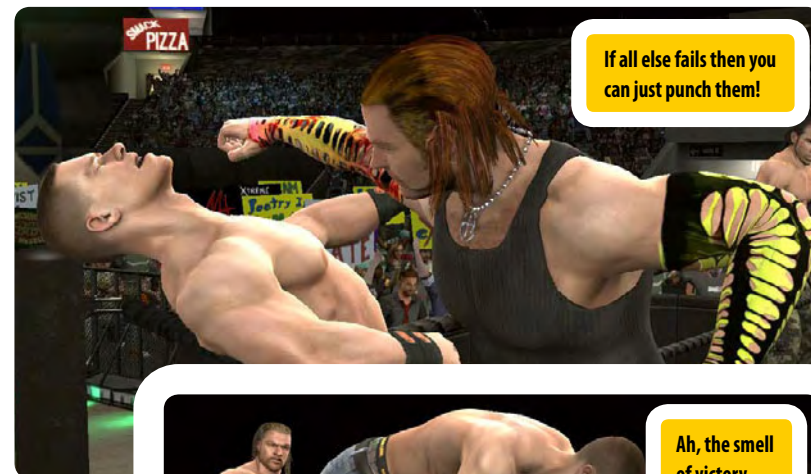
Ring fighting is one thing, but you know what these wrestlers are like. They love a scrap and, more often than not, a rumble can kick off just about anywhere, and with anything. In SmackDown vs. RAW 2009, you can slap your opponent with a ladder, pin him with barbed wire and then put his head in a bin for ultimate shame. But of course, it gets worse just as you strap on the Spandex because there's a Locker Room Brawl mode which is the same as the above, only in a smaller area featuring even more humiliating objects. Live TV set on the head sir? Check! Pot plant on your face? Check! How about a tactics board between your cheeks? Ouch!

Then we have the tag team matches and six-man tag events, just to spice things up a bit more. The first thing you'll notice when playing is that you can now do much more when you're out of the ring taking a break while your team-mate fights. You'll have ample chance to strike

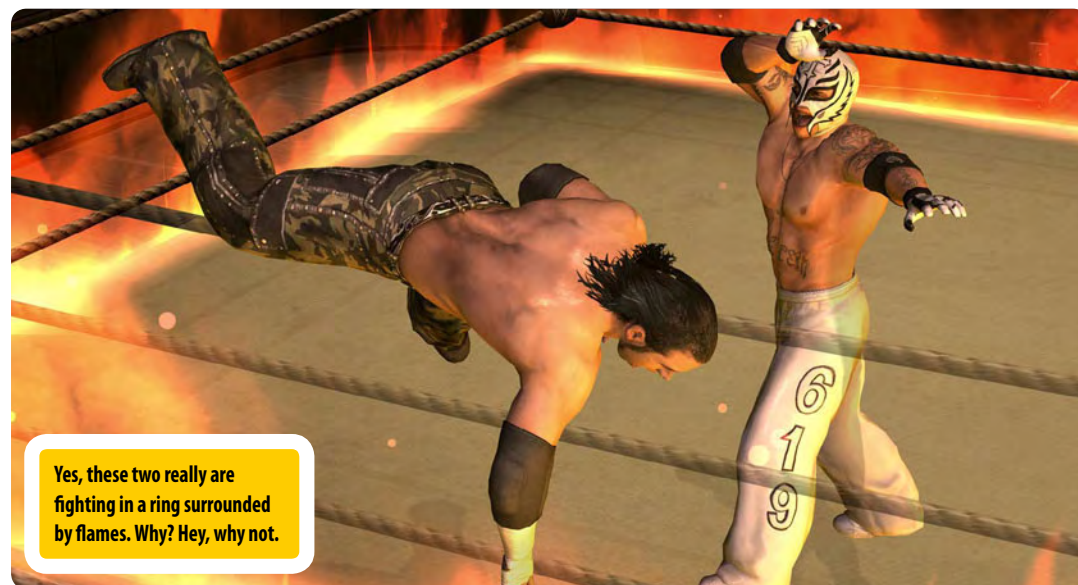
your rival if he comes near your restricted area, and even grab him by his head like a rag doll. hilariously, you can also distract the ref and pull the ropes back as your rival stumbles, leaving him to fall out of the ring like a tub of drunk, shiny lard. The camera now pans more intelligently too, and you won't be distracted by close-ups of the things you don't want to see spoiling your view, like ropes.

Core blimey!

The core game has also been expanded to include the Road to Wrestlemania mode too, which is essentially a story mode with new plots and scenarios. And we're not just talking cutscenes either, although there's over two hours of them featuring the real voices of the superstars. Expect plot twists and surprises that actually change the way you play – enemies can unexpectedly gatecrash the party and your friend can turn into a foe



"The core game has also been expanded to include the Road to Wrestlemania mode, too"



> SmackDown 2009 cont.

in a matter of seconds. There's several different stories to play, featuring either Cena, Mysterio, Batista, Undertaker or Triple H. Mysterio and Batista's story can be played as a co-op game too, cranking up the time you'll spend playing the game by yourself or with a friend.

This is definitely the biggest WWE game yet and it's now looking visually stunning too. Teasingly, THQ have also confirmed extra, downloadable goodies but haven't told us what to expect just yet. As a neat extra, loading screens now display achievements and stats for your character, too.

Then there's the Create a Finisher mode, back to prove that custom combos are the best thing ever. You can change the speed of the animations, the name of the finisher and you can preview them all too. It's the science of wrestling, laid bare in step-by-step option screens. When you're in preview mode, you can pick the camera angles you like and start to dribble about the possibility of using the finisher against live bait. Talking of which, it's time to unveil the Inferno match, which is based on the first time flames ever made it to WWE a decade ago. This time, however, the flames around the ring get bigger the more you slap your opponent. As the flames rise to truly



ridiculous heights, you can then finish your opponent by lobbing him straight into the fire.

All this extra pain means you can expect a higher rating for the game, not that it makes a bit of difference, apart from the fact it let's the developers do exactly what you asked for in the first place. That's the key to WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009 – simple supply and demand. You asked for it and THQ have given you everything you ever wanted in a

wrestling game. Where it goes from here is anybody's guess, but we're convinced that you'll be hugely impressed with this year's update. ●



**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
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you think of
SmackDown
vs. RAW 2009

360Zine



HOW COMPLETE?

95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

We've high hopes for this year's WWE update

Fallout 3

Prepare for the Future™



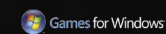
PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

Available 31st October

PrepareForTheFuture.com

18+

www.pegi.info



PLAYSTATION 3



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CONTROL →





VELVET ASSASSIN

Steve Hill talks World War II stealth
with Replay Studios creative director
Sascha Jungnickel



Standing on tin roof
defeats Nazi oppressors.



EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE

The games central character
is based loosely on World
War II spy, Violette Szabo.

The story is loosely based on the real-life exploits of British World War II spy Violette Szabo, but with a twist. Can you explain?

It's all real locations and inspired by the whole aura of this person, and some of the missions are kind of inspired by her. The storyline is that the main character is lying in a hospital and just has memories and flashbacks of all the missions she's been on. We took this method of storytelling in order to be able to bend the scenarios a bit more, because it takes you away from the realism approach and gives you more of a chance to work artistically, especially in terms of lighting and so on.

So you're not attempting to make an ultra-realistic simulation?

It doesn't need to be totally realistic. It's a trade between fun, control and

realism. A game that's fun normally isn't realistic. It's easier to have a strange story that takes it away from the realism without any excuses afterwards. ➤



Ironically, Violette turns violet
when skulking in the shadows.





Don't worry, she's
only dreaming...

**"I think most male players
will care more for a female
character that they like"**

Graphically, Velvet Assassin is
looking very sweet indeed.



ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

> Interview continued

When you play Call of Duty then of course it looks realistic, but it's not at all. The people, how they run... they're always coming the same way. In the end the game looks realistic enough but it is not realistic. I think when you don't claim to be realistic then you cannot be judged for not being that.

There's a weird bit where she's running round in slow motion killing Nazis in her nightie while cranked up on morphine. Can you clarify what's happening there?

Okay, as I told you she's in the hospital and she's having dreams of these missions; flashbacks of stuff that happened to her. By getting morphine to calm her down it changes her memories, which is then reflected in the gameplay.

What prompted the decision to go for a stealth game?

First-person shooters today are very similar. We like the sneaking mechanics and there are not enough sneaking games on the market, and we thought

this could be good combined with a World War II scenario. Different ways of solving lead to different kinds of achievements, so that gives it replayability. It's more alternate methods than alternate routes.

What other 'sneaking' games do you admire?

The Hitman game had some mechanics that I liked, especially the camouflage. In Velvet Assassin you can re-hide; you can reset every situation by running away and waiting for everyone to calm down. That's basically the mechanic that we loved in the Manhunt game, which I think is still the best sneaking mechanic of all the games I've played before.

What are the advantages of having a female character?

For a stealth game I think a female lead is quite a good idea, because mostly male players will, I think, care more for a female character that he likes. She's more fragile, easier to hurt; you don't want to kill her. I'd take much more care of her than I would of Sam Fisher, because I don't care if he dies. ●

SASCHA JUNGNIKKEL



An Amiga veteran back in the day, more recently Sascha worked on Hitman: Blood Money for IO Interactive. Along with a number of that team, he then decamped to Replay Studios in Hamburg and is now putting the finishing touches to Velvet Assassin.

VELVET ASSASSIN

Publisher: Gamecock Media

Developer: Replay Studios

Heritage: Crash Day

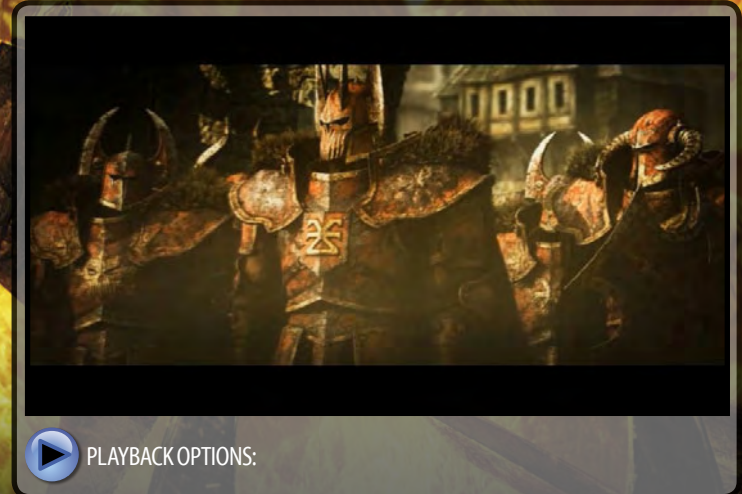
Link: www.velvetassassin.com

ETA: Late 2008



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PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



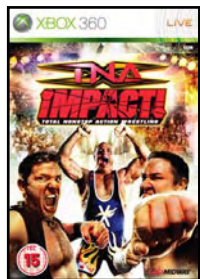
<http://warhammer.deepsilver.com>

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CONTROL →





Publisher: Midway
Developer: Midway LA
Heritage: Mortal Kombat
Link: www.tnaimpact.com
OUT NOW

TNA iMPACT!

One for the fans, by the fans?

As you may expect from a wrestling game, Midway LA, and the wrestlers who helped create the game, have been talking a lot of smack in the run-up to its release. Looking to put right everything that WWE's been doing wrong, TNA – we were promised – would be leading the way as a wrestling fans' wrestling game made by the people, for the people.

And to begin with, at least, it seems like the smack may have at least been

reasonably justified. TNA's controls are certainly a lot faster, as instead of using a combination of right analogue stick and face buttons, the game's controls are centred entirely around the buttons, with A and X punching and kicking, Y initiating a grapple, and B performing actions such as climbing a turnbuckle or sliding out of the ring.

But unfortunately, it's not just the controls that are a lot simpler, as the selection of moves on offer is actually

"The career mode has taken a different direction in TNA"

pretty limited. If you'd hoped for a wide variety of moves with which to decimate your opponent, you'd best think again, as you could probably count the variations of moves on your fingers. There's only an incredibly small number of grapple moves – and as you only have the option of executing a few anyway, this often leads to matches being rinse-repeat affairs.

A change of career

The career mode – long an area that gamers have lambasted in WWE games, has also taken a different direction in TNA. Taking a vicious beatdown on your wrestler, where your face is destroyed beyond recognition as its cue, you get to create your own grappler, and wrestle your way back into TNA, following a storyline full of betrayal, backstabbing and Kevin Nash.

But while the plot may be passable, the actual action is less than impressive. Divided into 'chapters', the game again suffers from what may soon be called TNA syndrome, as practically every chapter is made up of three or four lots of the same match, against entirely generic wrestlers. Whether that means wrestling three tag matches back to back, or three Ultimate Xs, eventually you'll end up with gimmick overload, ➤

MATCH TYPES

Bring on the pain!



Singles



Tag



Ultimate X



Singles

The staple of every wrestling game, the singles match lets you and a friend, or the AI duke it out in a battle to the end. The end of the match, anyway...



The pinning mechanism on TNA will quickly break your controller.

FREEZE FRAME

Breaking the game down, one stage at a time...



CAREER SUICIDE

This is you. Suicide. Good-looking fella. You're on top of the world – the TNA Heavyweight Champion.



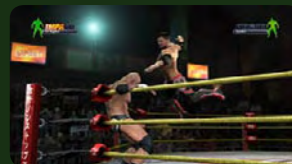
DUMPED!

Until you're attacked from behind, and dumped in Tijuana by a bunch of Latin thugs. Nice.



STARTING FROM SCRATCH

With nothing to your name, you do the only thing you can – wrestle, eventually winning a trip to TNA.



THE ONLY WAY IS UP

And it's here where you get your TNA tryout, and from here on in, the only way is up for your character.



CHAMPION!

Smash the competition, listen to the advice and become TNA Heavyweight Champion. Again.

Kurt Angle and Christian Cage, just two WWE wrestlers who jumped ship to TNA.



"The AI here is of the 'reverse every move ad infinitum' variety"



Four player free-for-alls are loads of fun.

> TNA IMPACT! continued

and the feeling that you desperately fancy a change.

But even this would be tolerable if the gameplay stood up on its own, but unfortunately the AI puts paid to that. Instead of being a decent challenge, the AI here is of the 'reverse every move ad infinitum' variety, that will quickly lead to you breaking your controller in frustration. Seriously – in mid-career matches, the computer reverses around 90 per cent of your moves. That's not how wrestling works in real life, and nor is it fun to play.

But despite the huge failure that is the career mode, in multiplayer the gameplay actually seems to work. While Live play remains incredibly limited (and a bit buggy), in offline and with four players of equal skill, this can be a great pure wrestling showcase – and nowhere near as annoying as playing against the AI.

How much fun you get out of TNA likely depends on how much of a TNA fan you are. If you love the show then you'll get some mileage out of the

game, but for everyone else, the decision revolves around whether you're willing to pay full whack for what's effectively, just half a game. ●

Ian Morris

360Zine Verdict

Flawed and limited, it's still a blast in the multiplayer mode. One for fans only.



Great visuals



Disappointing gameplay



Fairly limited

70%



FIFA 09



The beautiful videogame

Critics have become so used to the FIFA series lagging behind Konami's Pro Evolution Soccer that they failed to notice just how much last year's game had improved – for most gamers, it was a definite cut above the disappointing Pro Evo 2008. The football engine seemed to have improved further with UEFA Euro 2008, which upped the pace on what was admittedly far from the quickest football game ever made. So can this year's FIFA improve things yet further?

The answer: an emphatic yes. At the time of writing, this year's Pro Evo

remains unplayed, but it'll take a Herculean effort to overthrow FIFA as football's top dog this season.

Fluid football

The improvements are all fairly slight, but combine to make noticeable differences to how impressively realistic and fluid it all feels. While last year's measured pace made for an intriguing – if a little stilted – tactical game, this is near-as-dammit real football, adopting the fast-paced ferocity of the Premiership, combined with the skills so prevalent in the continental game.



Attention to detail is the key – the 15 new stadia all have various paraphernalia lining the pitch.

Something Konami's series has always got spot-on is the ball movement, which has never seemed quite right in FIFA – even in last year's game. However, both ball and player physics have been vastly improved, enabling players to ping passes about at greater pace, while ricochets and rebounds add a realistic amount of chaos. When you see a ball go in after spinning off an unfortunate defender sliding in just as your striker's about to pull the trigger, it feels like real football. And a special mention must go to the heading mechanics, which are now a long, long way ahead of the competition. It's a shame the replays are still a little too choppy (and short) to frame the action in the way it deserves – yet it looks so good when you're playing that it's easy to forgive. As well as looking great, it also sounds better than before too – several

OVER THE MOON

How FIFA has risen to the top of the footy pile



Shoot-'em-up



Heading to the top



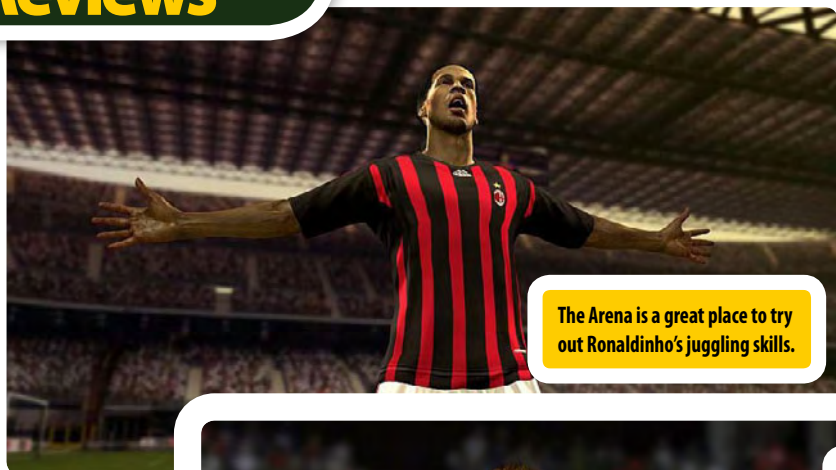
Tactical battle



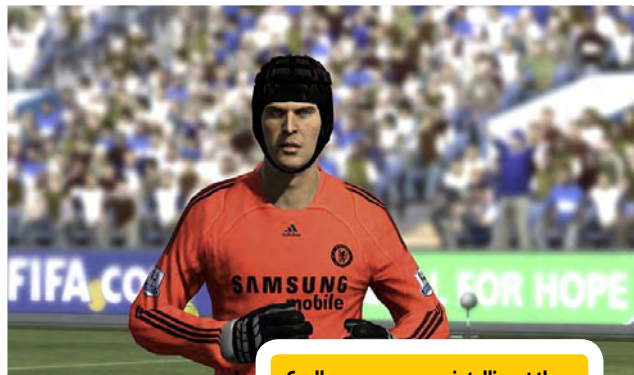
Shoot-'em-up

FIFA's shooting has been significantly tweaked, and you'll find it easier to score from outside the area. If you hit a shot sweetly enough, you can curl 30-yarders into the top corner, while finesse shots allow you to place shots more accurately at a slight cost of additional power.





The Arena is a great place to try out Ronaldinho's juggling skills.



Goalkeepers are more intelligent than ever – reacting quicker to deflections and ricochets, as well as coming forward for injury-time corners!



Be A Pro now offers a four-season campaign, as good performances improve your player's statistics, competing against rival footballers to become a legend of the game.

Roll over screen for annotations



> FIFA 09 continued

teams have their own crowd chants, while the atmosphere of the bigger games is well recreated. Referees and their assistants are also present, and remarkably well-animated – you might even find yourself trying to get caught offside just to see the flag movements.

Fully automatic passing is still occasionally capricious, but you can adjust the settings to influence balls manually, or opt for a halfway house which tends to work extremely well.

The introduction of custom team tactics now allows you to play a formation which truly suits your approach to the game, while the Be A Pro mode has been expanded into a full career. There's also a 10 vs 10 online mode, which sadly was unavailable in our review code, so we'll bring you more news on how that plays soon. If it works anywhere near as well as the single-player, then it'll be yet another worthy addition from EA Sports.

"It'll take a Herculean effort to overthrow FIFA as football's top dog this season"

It's so rich with features that we've not room to list them all. But with the Adidas Live Season updating player and team stats according to real-world performances, the improved Arena making one of gaming's best attract modes even better, and the advanced skill-stick controls, utilising the right analogue for some showboating, defender-beating tricks, FIFA finally feels like the complete package. Game on, Konami. ●

Chris Schilling



There are several custom celebrations, involving various button presses and stick movements.

360Zine Verdict

Quite possibly the finest football sim ever made.

- Immaculate ball and player physics
- Rich in modes and options
- Refined Be A Pro mode

91%





Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

Publisher: LucasArts

Developer: LucasArts

Heritage: Star Wars

Galaxies, Star Wars

Battlefront

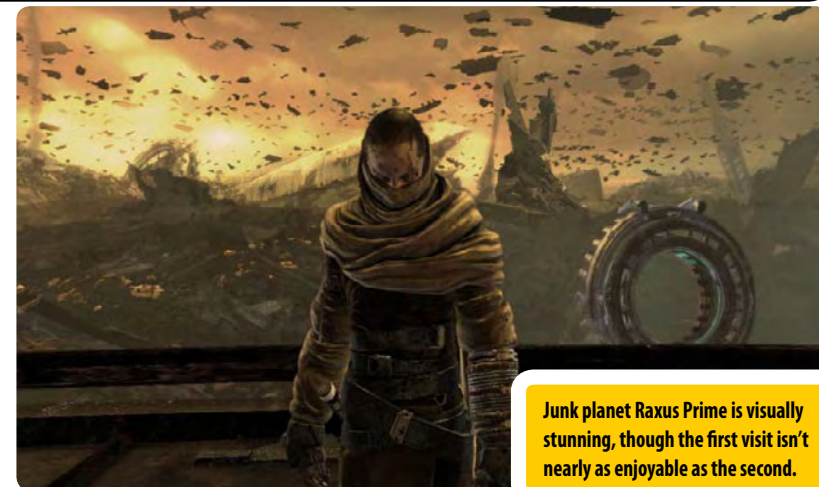
Link: www.lucasarts.com/games/theforceunleashed

OUT NOW

"I've got a good feeling about this..."

Straight off the bat, the answer (as opposed to the droids) that you're looking for is yes, you should. If you're a Star Wars fan, then this is not going to desecrate your memories of your beloved films, and is indeed a mighty fine addition to the canon. It fills in the gaps between Episodes III and IV quite beautifully in places, with some genuinely intriguing plot developments, such as the

moment the Rebel Alliance was formed, as well as developing a couple of minor characters and hurling at least two stunning twists your way. As a story, it works very well, fleshing out what appeared to be a rather bland protagonist (at least from his appearance in Soul Calibur IV) and creating a character you can actually root for, despite the initial stages setting you as Darth Vader's apprentice.



Junk planet Raxus Prime is visually stunning, though the first visit isn't nearly as enjoyable as the second.

Indeed, the Dark Lord of the Sith kicks off proceedings with a level of his own, almost single-handedly finishing off the Wookiee resistance on their home planet in a stage which also acts as a tutorial. You're virtually invincible during this opener, as you hurl Chewbacca's chums off bridges, with the Digital Molecular Matter engine providing realistically crumbling scenery, and the Havok physics impressing too. The Euphoria engine – introduced to improve enemy AI – fares less well. Enemies tend to overwhelm you in numbers rather than by intelligence, and in later stages some of their tactics seem decidedly cheap.

After such a blistering opener, The Force Unleashed struggles to keep the momentum, with an enjoyable but uninspired opening level giving way to a weaker second stage with Vader's new Apprentice. Then it introduces the visually stunning junk planet of Raxus Prime, but fails to give the player much of interest to do there, with a couple of woeful platforming sections compromised by the camera, which

UNLEASH THE FORCE

How to use your midichlorians wisely



Force lightning

Hover bover

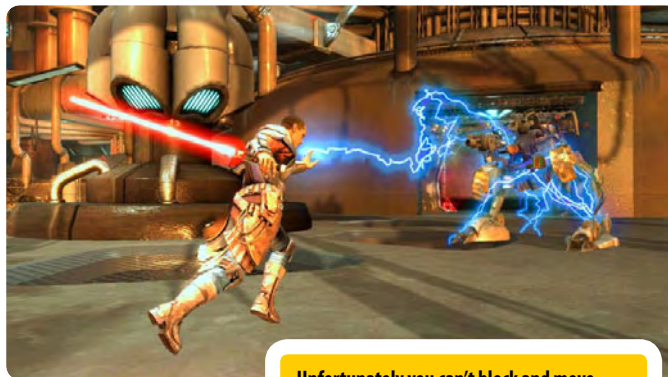
Saber dance

Force lightning

Easily the most powerful of your new abilities, Force lightning is perhaps a little too effective at times, though it drains your meter fairly quickly. Later you'll be able to electrify multiple enemies, while it's particularly useful against mechanical opponents.



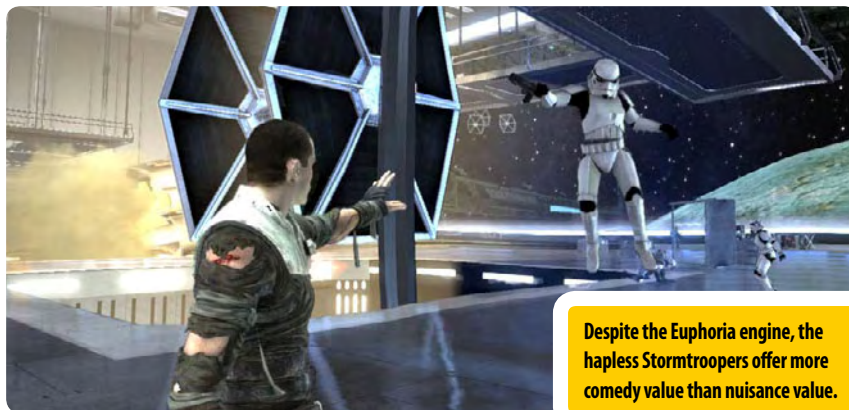
The Apprentice has a Force move that sends a powerful outward blast which can send a crowd of enemies tumbling.



Unfortunately you can't block and move simultaneously – given how often you're under attack from opponents with rapid-fire weapons, this can get a little frustrating.



Finishing off larger enemies almost always requires you to complete a Quick-Time Event, pressing a sequence of buttons to deliver the killing blow.



Despite the Euphoria engine, the hapless Stormtroopers offer more comedy value than nuisance value.

> Star Wars continued

can struggle in places. A cracking boss battle improves proceedings, before the jungle planet of Felucia offers some engaging rancor fights before lapsing into mediocrity with one section that marks easily the weakest part of the game. From there on in however, LucasArts raises its game, visiting fanboy favourite locations like the cloud city of Bespin, picking up the pace significantly, varying the combat a lot more and significantly ramping up the story's prominence without letting the impressive cutscenes drag on. Then you get one absolutely brilliant moment of pure fan-service, followed by a suitably epic climax.

While the combat never reaches Devil May Cry levels of fluidity and complexity, it improves as the game goes on, with more and more Force powers and combo attacks available as you level up your character. And if the lightsabers never quite feel powerful

"As licenses go, it's a cut above most of the competition"

enough, then the remaining abilities make up for that. It's just a pity that, for what's a fairly short game – admittedly with decent replay value thanks to its wealth of unlockables – it's not quite consistent or polished enough to raise it up among the best third-person action games of this generation. As licenses go, however, it's a cut above most of the competition, with a story that might just be better than Lucas's own recent efforts in the cinema. ●

Chris Schilling

360Zine Verdict

The Force is indeed strong with this one.



Force powers and Havok physics = gold



Compelling story with cracking twists



Too many QTEs and a wonky camera

80%



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Xbox Live Arcade Round-Up

Another fantastic four available for download today...



"There are a host of new offline and online events for the two-wheelers"

Burnout Paradise Bikes Pack

Developer: Criterion

Publisher: Criterion Price: Free

A stunning piece of downloadable content that deserves a review here because it offers so much for absolutely zero cost. There are a host of new offline and online events for the two-wheelers, a full day/night cycle – whose transition speed can be tweaked, or you can set it to a specific time of day – and a whole new license to work towards. It's not perfect – at night, you'll struggle to

make the streets out unless you've got your brightness setting turned up, and the crashes are weedy, while some will sneer at the lack of boost for the bikes. But for precisely no pounds and no pence, it seems churlish to complain. Credit to Criterion for its generosity.

- ✔ Loads of new content
- ✔ Doesn't cost a penny
- ✔ Night's just too dark!

Incredible value

88%

Meteos Wars

Developer: Q Entertainment

Publisher: Q Entertainment Price: 800 MP (~£6.80)

The DS puzzler gets an XBLA makeover, and comes out looking slightly worse. The problem is that it just doesn't work as well without a stylus, with the tile-swapping handled with the analogue stick and two face buttons – one to shunt blocks downwards, one to fire them upwards. While the core mechanics are intact, the pace of the original is lost, and the slightly sterile looks lack the charm of the handheld game. You can probably pick up the DS game for under a tenner now, and we'd recommend that you do just that.



- ✔ No scrubs!
- ✔ Sounds nice
- ✔ Weaker than the original

Spaced out

65%



Castle Crashers

Developer: The Behemoth

Publisher: The Behemoth Price: 1200 MP (~£10.20)

While you may think that 1200 points always seems like quite a lot for a Live Arcade title, Castle Crashers more than justifies its cost. It's a modern-day take on side-scrolling brawlers of old, and while it'll bring tears of nostalgia to some older gamers' eyes, we'd have to say that this knocks most of the games it references into a cocked hat. Its glorious art style – like Alien Hominid but less sketchy – and its wacky humour adds to the appeal, and it mixes its gameplay up just enough to avoid repetition.

- ✔ Gorgeous graphics
- ✔ Satisfying gameplay
- ✔ A few tiny niggles

Crazy cartoon chaos

88%

Feeding Frenzy 2: Shipwreck Showdown

Developer: Gastronom Studios

Publisher: PopCap Games

Price: 800 MP (~£6.80)

If you played the original for any length of time, then you won't find much new here, but if you're new to the series, you'll find an addictive experience awaits. Feeding Frenzy 2 might not be a new idea, and it might not be suited to a hardcore audience, but once it's got its hooks into you, you'll struggle to wriggle free. With a host of minigames included, this is all good-natured family fun.



- ✔ Genuinely charming
- ✔ Worryingly addictive
- ✔ Nothing new

Yes, it really is awesome

71%

In 360Zine Issue 24

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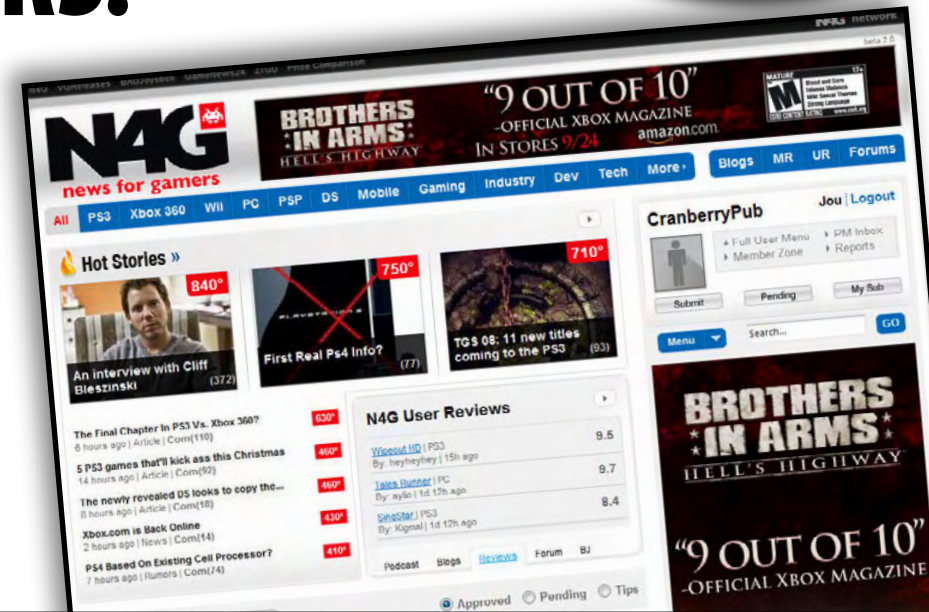
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FABLE II

Read the definitive guide inside...

7
EXCLUSIVE
NEW
SCREENS!

GOOD OR
EVIL?



How will you play
through Fable II?



PUB
GAMES

Win items and
earn extra money!

INTERVIEW

PETER
MOLYNEUX

Why Lionhead's
main man loves
Fable II



FABLE II

Welcome

From the throbbing hive of activity that is Bowerstone marketplace to the dark, frightening pirate port of Bloodstone, the universe of Albion is a rich, intoxicating world to explore – a world full of secrets, of choices, of wonder. There's more than just a main quest and some side quests to enjoy. There's a rich simulation game to get involved in – can you buy all of the houses in the world? There's a social aspect – can you find a partner and successfully raise a family?

Can you do the right thing? Do you want to even? Can you even tell what the right thing to do is? See our Good vs Evil feature to see what we mean about choices.

This is the beauty of Fable II – your game experience will be so different to someone else's. It's a role-playing game and a life simulation; it's an economy simulator and a social experience – both in single-player and the Jump-in, Jump-out multiplayer. It's a game with real wit and thought put into every aspect – and one glance at the ingenious Achievement list proves that – and the time we've spent exploring Albion just makes us even more excited to sink our teeth into the final game.

Roll on October 24th, and the arrival of what's likely to be one of the most uniquely brilliant experiences you'll have on your 360 this year.

Enjoy the issue,

Chris Schilling

"Fable II is going to be so many different things to a great many people"

EXCLUSIVE SCREENSAVER

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Good vs Evil 03

Find out why the choices you make will change your entire Fable II experience...

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Essential tips, tricks & tactics to help you win big!

FABLE II



FEATURE

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

Why morality is more than just Black & White

One of the most significant changes to Fable II is the whole morality system. No longer will your decisions be clear-cut choices between noble heroism or demonic nastiness – here you'll have to think about the consequences of your actions, and how they'll impact on your progress.

Take the early example of the star-crossed lovers – a prologue quest which sees a young couple declaring their love for each other, in true Romeo and Juliet style. The girl's interfering mother, concerned that her daughter is about to elope with this man she considers unworthy,

interrupts the tryst – at which point, the young man asks you to pass a letter onto his beloved. Yet ring the doorbell, and it's the mother who answers. If you hand the letter to her, are you helping a mother protect her daughter from trouble, or simply preventing the path of true love from running smoothly? Another scene might see you unlock a caged prisoner from his cell. You could either be freeing an unjustly enslaved peasant or releasing a thug on to the world of Albion – the fact that his captor drew a sword on you may have swayed your decision, but does that mean



CONTROL →



FABLE II

Fable II continued

he deserved to be let loose?

It's fascinating to see how this has developed from Fable's more simplistic approach – and there are other measures of your behaviour besides good and bad. There's also a meter for purity and corruption, and another which ranges from vicious cruelty to absolute kindness

Players who adopted a virtuous role in the first game may be tempted to inject a wicked streak into their play without it impacting too greatly on their hero status, while others will switch their brand of evil from malevolent to benevolent. Sure, you might have just killed someone's family, but you can always apologise afterwards.

The path you choose will still impact upon your character's appearance. The more evil you become, the less human you'll look – sprouting horns and facial disfigurements – while those who

fight for all that is good and right may just see a halo sprout above their avatar. And that's not all.

Depending on your actions, shopkeepers may refuse to serve you or adjust their prices accordingly. If you're the embodiment of evil, villagers will boo and hiss at you – or alternatively run away screaming – whereas a heroic avatar will frequently find himself surrounded by his adoring public. And you'll likely be more attractive to the local womenfolk as well.

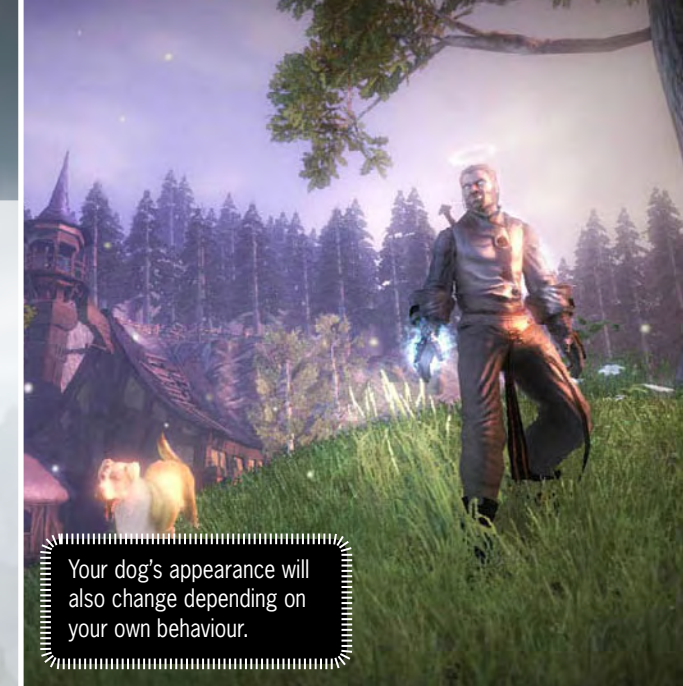
Your behaviour won't directly influence many of the game's story quests, but you'll find that certain side quests and other tasks only become available once you reach a certain level of goodness (or indeed, should you find yourself on the rocky road to the dark side).

Given that it's possible to kill anyone except the plot's key characters, you may find yourself missing out on a boatload of content if you're a little too trigger – or

sword-happy – although then again, your evil behaviour won't have gone unnoticed either, so certain nefarious individuals will be more likely to offer you work if you're behaving very badly indeed. It's actually possible that you'll be treated completely differently in two separate areas of Albion.

In Bowerstone you might be a bit of a legend, but in Bloodstone you may well be considered an easy target – a paragon of virtue on one side of the map, and a thieving, womanising drunk on the other. It's all up to you.

Yet despite all the extreme behavioural possibilities it's the subtle inbetweens that define Fable II's approach to role-playing – where you're not merely shunting your character from one path to the

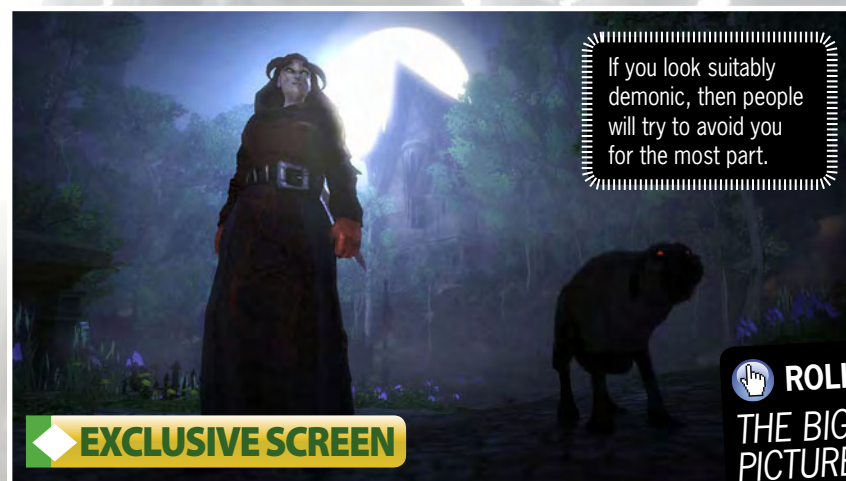


Your dog's appearance will also change depending on your own behaviour.

other, but guiding them in a totally non-linear manner according to your own whims. In other words, your characters behave exactly how you want them to behave. And of Fable II's many innovations, perhaps that's the most revolutionary of the lot. ●



Your ugliness rating will soar if you're consistently evil.



If you look suitably demonic, then people will try to avoid you for the most part.

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



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EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

FABLE II

Publisher:
Microsoft Game Studios
Developer:
Lionhead
Heritage:
Black & White, Fable, The Movies
Link: www.lionhead.com
ETA: 24th October

Fable II

Spend some time down in Albion

Fable II is set some five hundred years after the original, with the world of Albion having evolved significantly in the intervening years. It's a neat metaphor for the game itself, which has improved an already superb original almost beyond recognition. If the first game suffered from technology limitations stymying Peter Molyneux's ambitious vision, then this current-gen sequel

finally sees the developer's imagination given free rein. It's telling that Lionhead is having trouble squeezing it onto a single DVD-9. You begin the game as a child – either male or female this time – trudging through the snow-covered backstreets of Bowerstone with your sibling, desperately trying to scrape together enough gold to buy a mysterious and powerful item



The snowy prologue doubles up as a tutorial, introducing players to the controls and themes of the game while weaving a compelling narrative.



ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE

"It's improved an already superb original beyond recognition"



EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE

As an adult, you'll start out in this small settlement.

CONTROL →



FABLE II

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

Ideas Man

How Peter Molyneux's innovations set Fable II apart from other RPGs



Combat

Development

Story

Combat

Enter into battle, and you certainly won't be standing in line, taking turns trading blows with your enemies. Nor will you be wildly hacking away by stabbing at a single button (though the choice is there to do that if you want it). And you definitely won't be seeing numbers spouting from the top of your opponents' heads. Fable II offers a revolution in RPG combat that could well wind up influencing future titles, with its economy of button commands belying a surprisingly complex system which allows you to adjust from wielding axes to casting spells without any messing around. Indeed, the fluidity of the combat is such that you can do both simultaneously.

> Fable II continued

from a market stall, which leads to a tragic twist, before you fast-forward to adulthood and set out on a hero's quest relating to this incident. We can't say any more for fear of spoiling events, but suffice to say that Fable II, while offering plenty of whimsy throughout, can get really dark at times.

That's hardly surprising, really – Fable II offers light and shade in so many respects, from its myriad choices leading you on the path to either good or evil, while there's also a purity and corruption mechanic that tracks your behaviour in more subtle ways. In other words, you can

play as the Albion equivalent of Han Solo – an undoubtedly heroic figure that still has a bit of a shady side.

And choosing to be a loveable rogue is just one of a great many approaches you can take. In

Feel free to deck your hero out in the most outrageous get-ups you can find – but don't be surprised when you get funny looks from non-player characters.

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



"Fable II is your game – it's a very personal experience"

essence, Fable II is your game – a very personal experience you can tailor to your own preferences, which means that no two games will play out identically.

MORAL MAJORITY

Your actions directly affect everything within Fable II, which means that no decision can be taken lightly – and Lionhead has thrown in a fair few moral quandaries to test your mettle when it comes down to the crunch. Do you free those prisoners, or leave them caged? Do you disobey orders to choose what you think is a more virtuous option? Morality doesn't just change your avatar's character, it changes their appearance, too. Stroll down the murky path to malevolence and your face and body will change



Use the Play and Stop controls to the left, or click here to see the enhanced version!



CONTROL →



FABLE II

> Fable II continued

accordingly, becoming less attractive and more fearsome to look at. And a puritanical hero will positively glow with the radiance that such noble deeds bring. You'll also change the world around you with your actions. Once you start raking in the cash, you'll be able to buy property, eventually amassing enough to pick out entire villages for purchase – whereupon you'll have the option to lease out your holdings, potentially for extortionate prices to line your wallet, and that will change the game's economic balance accordingly.

Role playful

The game's Achievements are hugely inventive, and offer genuine replay value, as you won't be able to get them all on a single playthrough. The reason for this is that some will be quite tricky to achieve first time round if you've decided to follow a certain path. If you're determined to be good, then you might not get the Chicken Kicker Achievement, while those playing as an evil character may struggle to convince enough women to join them for the Swinger Achievement. Meanwhile, you'll earn small rewards for killing rabbits, getting villagers drunk and committing acts of public indecency. More sensible players will be pleased that the story quests generally offer more Gamerpoinsts, however. But if you want the full 1000 adding to your Gamerscore, you'll almost certainly have to play it two or three times.

BEEN CAUGHT STEALING

If you'd rather be even more devious in your moneymaking, you can steal from people. First you have to ensure that your character isn't being watched, and then attempt to grab the item in question by holding down the A button while a green bar encircles a small onscreen eyeball (representing whether or not you can be seen). Should the eyeball start to turn towards the front, you can immediately retract your hand and should hopefully get away with it. And if the circle manages to join up at the top, then you've pilfered the item successfully. Get spotted however, and you can expect your standing within the community to change – every single action affects how you're viewed by other people in the gameworld. You're instantly seen as a bit of a hero by the Bowerstone Gypsy Camp you start out in, as until you set out on your quest, no-one has ever left the camp before.

Elsewhere you might be viewed as a bit of a ladies' man if you spend your time wooing that area's busty maidens, and it pays to check your menus before you wander into a town you've not visited for a while, in case they remember the episode where you farted in the face of a small child and you suddenly remember that you're persona non grata. That's something you'll almost always be in misty pirate port

Bloodstone – a dark, imposing hamlet with residents who are more proficient at communicating with swords than with words. That said, the same place also offers dubious pleasures – like an overweight, scantily-clad male prostitute whose proposition may well be the least attractive offer you've ever had.

STAT ATTACK

There are reams and reams of stats to look at, many of which are hugely amusing, but all of which are relevant to the behaviour of non-player characters towards you. You might lose a bet which

“Every single action affects how you're viewed by other people in the gameworld”

Venture into the wilds at night, and you're asking for trouble.

ROLL OVER

THE BIG PICTURE

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

One man and his dog – though it's helpful to have a partner to help you out during trickier parts.

FABLE II

> Fable II continued

results in your face being tattooed all over, but you can reduce your ugliness by wearing a mask – which means people are less likely to comment on how repulsive you are as you skulk past. Even the clothes you wear – while obviously affecting your armour points and similar statistics - can force people to see you in a different light. There's even a Master Chief armour set in the game should you wonder what a Victorian Halo might feel like.

TEAMWORK

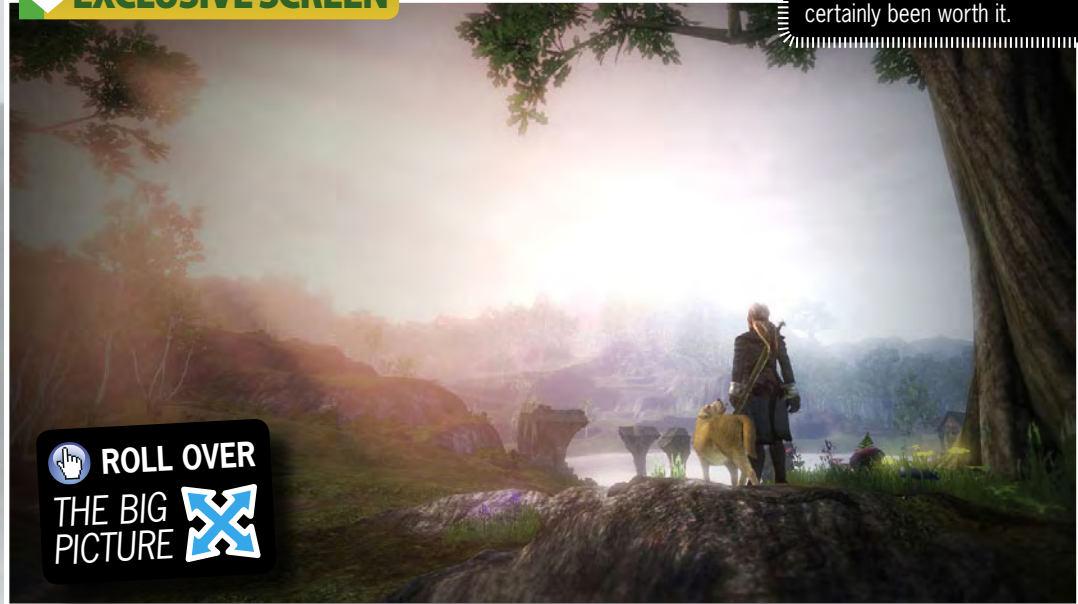
With such a variety between games,

it's little wonder that Fable II's co-operative mode is one of its most celebrated new features. If you're connected to Xbox LIVE, at any time you'll be able to see glowing purple orbs floating around Albion, representing your friends in their own versions of the gameworld.

You'll be able to walk up to one and immediately invite them into your game – though first you'll need to negotiate a fee. Because once that second player is in your world, they're able to affect it just as you can. Before this partnership can begin, however, you need to negotiate – the second player effectively becomes a



EXCLUSIVE SCREEN



ROLL OVER
 THE BIG PICTURE

Molyneux admits the game's exceptional lighting effects have been tricky to pull off, but the hard work has certainly been worth it.



Larger foes take a while to defeat using standard attacks, which is why it's best to learn the intricacies of the combat system, allowing you to pull off more powerful moves when you spot a gap in their defences.



Roll over screen for annotations

FABLE II

> Fable II continued

henchman to your protagonist, and you can specify the percentage amount of experience and loot they gain while in your version of Albion. And once your time together is over, the second player can leap back into their own game, with more experience and money to put to good use. It's an innovative idea that works terrifically well – neither of you will be able to wander too far, with the camera zooming out but keeping both players onscreen, essentially putting a set of reins on player two to stop them misbehaving. One of the key pleasures of co-operative mode is seeing how your friend's version of Albion has developed differently from your own. The number of choices available throughout means that two disparate approaches can lead to Albions that are worlds apart, almost to the stage where it feels

like two different games.

Fable II's world is huge, but it eschews the streaming approach to loading of other free-roaming games to load individual large areas separately. This enables each section of Albion to have much more detail, with non-player characters milling around market areas, and you have some way of interacting with all of them, be it talking to more significant figures, or merely gesturing towards a passer-by using the 'expression wheel' (activated simply by squeezing the right bumper). Indeed you can even express yourself during the game's cutscenes, which offer further interactivity at specific points, where a press of the left trigger focuses the camera on objects of interest.

There's so much to interact with it's unreal. Every single residence – be it a caravan, a house or a huge castle – that you're able to enter can also be purchased. You'll be able to set up small market stalls, choose the price you want to sell your wares at, and let them earn money for you in your absence. You'll even be able to profit from not playing the game thanks to the real-time gold-earning mechanic. Though you can't just wait months and gain an instant fortune – the game will reduce the amount you earn after a certain time, scaling the drop accordingly based on how long you've been away.

The combat is both accessible and flexible with much more depth than your average button-masher.



“There's so much to interact with it's unreal”

FIGHT CLUB

Of course more money means better weapons – all the better for those quests where you face off against fierce opponents in the game's vastly-improved combat sequences.

The 'carrot, not stick' approach to game design is very much in evidence here, in that casual players can get through most encounters by mashing the X button for repeated melee attacks, but those who use timed presses, holds and



Use the Play and Stop controls to the left, or click here to see the enhanced version!



CONTROL →



FABLE II

> Fable II continued

different moves will be rewarded with more experience. You're not punished for sticking with the same approach, but it's definitely worthwhile mixing it up. Flourishes are still there, except this time you get a more cinematic camera angle to show off your best Errol Flynn impression, and you'll get more orbs for finishing floored opponents off.

Larger orbs are reserved for the best combatants, and the colours correspond to which techniques were used in battle – blue orbs for melee combat, red for magic, and yellow for ranged attacks, with green

representing all-round experience. Each of these orbs can be 'spent' on new powers and techniques within the three main abilities of strength, skill and will. So you might buy 'brutal styles' to become more barbaric, or purchase 'chain attacks' if you prefer to string moves together rather than adopting the bludgeoning approach. You might opt for the sniper technique (which allows you to aim more accurately, zooming the action to a tight over-the-shoulder view) or any one of a number of spells, all of which have five different levels of power, and all of which can be focused around your character for area attacks –



Bloodstone is swarming with pirates, and it's a good idea to be prepared for a fight or three.



"There's even a Master Chief armour set"

ROLL OVER
THE BIG PICTURE

affecting any enemy wandering within range, or more powerful ranged attacks, which deal damage to single enemies (or more if your aim's particularly good). The skills screen shows you brief but incredibly useful video overviews of the item you're saving up for, so there's no buying blind. You'll also be able to beef up your character's more basic abilities – examples include physique (which increases your attack power) and toughness, which gives you a longer life bar. At any point if you want to undo your progress towards a specific skill,

you can – while it will cost you some experience to change approach, there's nothing stopping you from switching sword-fighting abilities for spells if you find a magician's role more appealing.

DOG FIGHT

You're not the only one who gets stuck in during skirmishes, either. Your character is joined by a dog – whom you rescue as a child from a Bowerstone bully – who will savage any foes foolish enough to fall over.

Your pooch acts as a constant companion throughout the game – and you'll be able to pamper



FABLE II

> Fable II continued

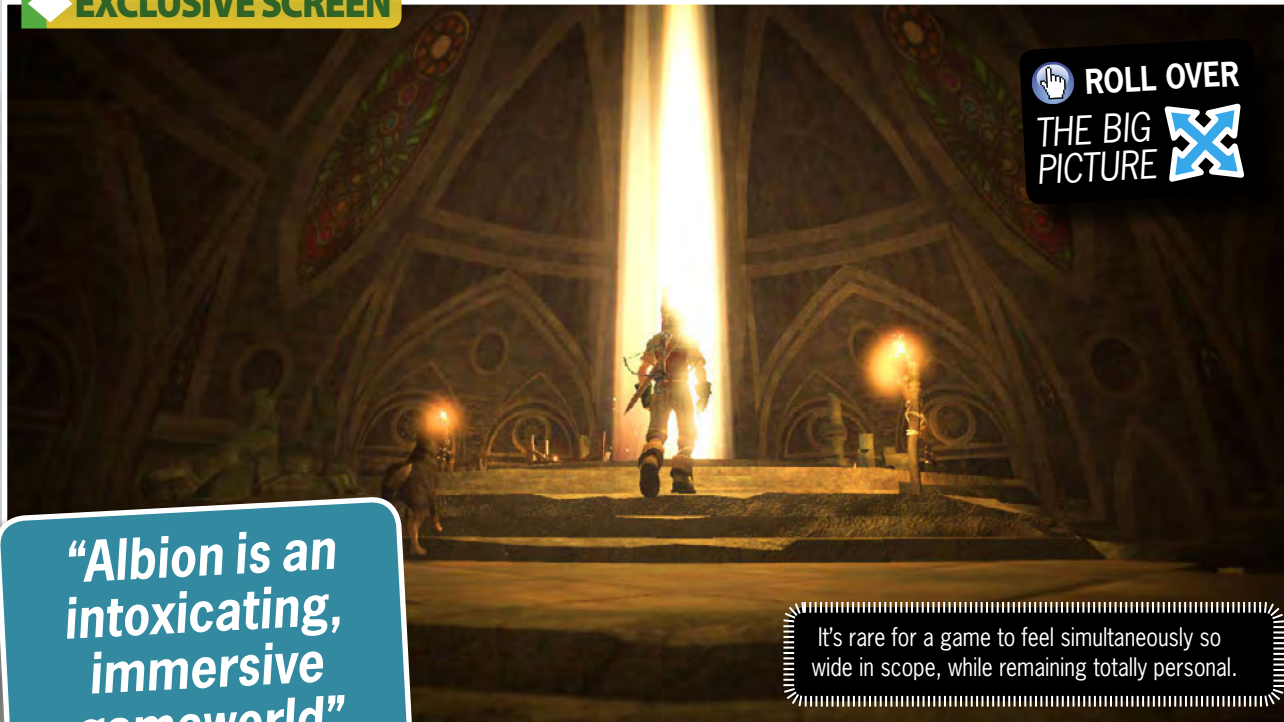


There's a refreshingly British feel to Fable, especially in its slightly bawdy sense of humour.

him to your heart's desire. Though overpraising and frequent treats will turn your canine chum into a lazy, spoilt mutt. Like your own character, your dog can be levelled up – rated from one to five stars at how useful he is in combat, or how effectively he can sniff out treasure.

You'll even be able to teach him tricks – shops will sell you items like a ball which you can throw for him to fetch, thus further building your relationship. He'll bark to alert you during certain situations – often it'll be a treasure chest that he's found, but sometimes it will be a warning that enemies are nearby. He's also responsible for guiding you away from the breadcrumb trail – the glowing path the game provides to help guide you to the next point of interest on each quest. It never gets to the point where you're led by the nose – instead the trail is there to

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN



ROLL OVER
 THE BIG PICTURE

“Albion is an intoxicating, immersive gameworld”

It's rare for a game to feel simultaneously so wide in scope, while remaining totally personal.

prevent players becoming lost – and is a massive help when you've followed your dog and can't find your way back. Should you follow the path fairly religiously, it will glow much brighter than for those who prefer to wander off the beaten track. And if you prefer to be without it completely, you'll always have the option to turn it off.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

The game's main story quest runs to

around twelve hours, but most players will take much, much longer to finish the game, simply because Albion's such an intoxicating, immersive gameworld that you'll want to spend more time there. And you're actively encouraged to go down the road less travelled as your dog will bark to indicate items of interest, and some of the game's best secrets won't be found on the breadcrumb trail. Indeed, Molyneux predicts that the average player will only have reached two-thirds of the potential character development,

with a host of levels remaining for more hardcore challenges, like the tricky demon doors where you'll face off against multiple strong enemies.

And if you're tired of traditional adventuring, then you can always spend time in the local inn, swilling ale until your view becomes blurry (with sound effects subtly changing in your inebriated state). Indeed, if you're more into sex than violence, then you'll be able to partake in orgies – though as with the first game, the screen will fade to black while engaging in coitus.





FABLE II

> Fable II continued



The art style remains the same, but the many areas of Albion couldn't look more different.

"It's rare that a game makes you feel so empowered"

Even here the choices remain – you can use a condom to prevent potentially debilitating sexually transmitted diseases, while if you wish to sow your wild oats you'll be able to get women pregnant should you go without a sheath. There's even an Achievement for 'taking part in an orgy, responsibly'.

JOB'S WORTH

Talking of responsibility, you'll be able to earn money by taking on a job, such as crafting swords for the

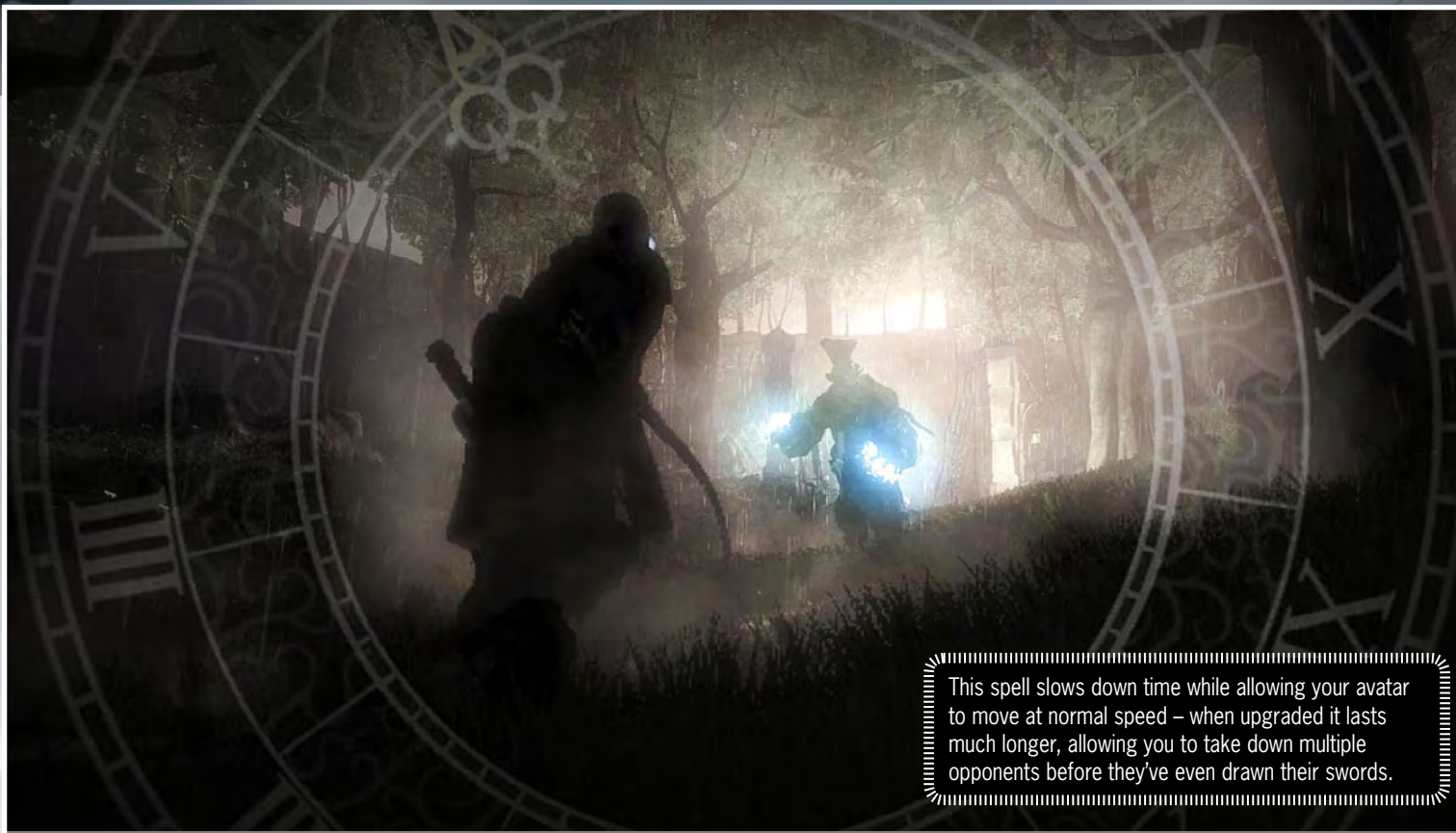
local blacksmith. This particular role takes on the form of a timing-based minigame, as you attempt to swipe the hammer at the correct time by pressing the A button as a marker reaches the green area of an arc. This gets progressively smaller and the marker moves much more quickly after a while – making for an entertaining challenge which you can return to whenever you want to make a bit more money, the honest way.

It's not the only task which requires

a bit of rhythm – should you fancy yourself as a street entertainer, you'll be able to attract crowds with a bit of Cossack Dancing, which employs a similar mechanic. Once again, this changes your position within the community, and may even cause the town minstrel to write a tune about you. Indeed, you'll be able to visit this songsmith regularly throughout, whereupon he'll base his words on whichever actions you've performed during your adventure. And should you tire of this minstrel's

wailings, you can always just kill him.

With so much to see and do, Fable II runs the risk of becoming seriously unfocused, but the fact that every choice of yours has some kind of consequence – however minor – means that everything in the game holds some significance. It's rare that a game makes you feel quite so important, so empowered, and it's a feeling we're sure most of you will want to share when Fable II makes its debut, exclusively to Xbox 360, on October 24th. ●



This spell slows down time while allowing your avatar to move at normal speed – when upgraded it lasts much longer, allowing you to take down multiple opponents before they've even drawn their swords.



CONTROL →



FABLE II



PETER MOLYNEUX

The head of Lionhead Studios and the man behind Fable and Fable II, *Peter Molyneux*, takes time out to talk us through his latest creation...

You've said that you have plenty of ideas for Fable III, IV and V. Given the time gap (500 years) and the technology advancement (invention of gunpowder) between Fable and Fable II, does this mean that we'll be seeing tactical nukes by Fable IV?

The reason I said that is I wanted people to understand that we weren't making it up as we went along. Each one of the story parts in Fable I and Fable II was thought about way back when we first came up with the idea of Fable. I always

wanted Fable I to be about the Guild, the Age of Heroes and magic and how important that was in the world - kind of a little how Europe was a thousand years ago, the time of King Arthur and Merlin. That was all a part of our culture, and suddenly that just disappeared.

That's why we skipped forward 500 years in Fable II, because we wanted to say "Right, you aren't part of this family of Heroes anymore, you're more on your own." The Heroes aren't around any more. People have lost faith in them." That's why we had such a time gap, but I don't think you'll be flying around in jet planes in Fable 3.



FABLE II

> Fable II continued

The inclusion of gunpowder is an interesting idea. It's not something you normally see in fantasy RPGs. What was the thinking here?

The style guide for Fable 1 was Sleepy Hollow, the Tim Burton film. The style guide of Fable II is Brotherhood of the Wolf, where it's a highwayman era, and there's a criminal element but they live alongside the rich element and it felt

wrong for there to be bows and arrows there. It's not like a sub machine gun. At best you're holding a repeater, which allows you to fire six shots before reloading and it tends to be a little bit slow.

You've never been heavily into doing sequels to your games before. What made you want to return to Fable?

I've not done a lot of sequels in my



time, but it did seem like when we started Fable that this was something that could go on. Also I thought that there were some things that went wrong with Fable 1 that really needed to be addressed.

Some of those were stupid things like giving you practically everything you'd need within an hour of playing.

Other things were more complex, like how awful the sneaking was. I thought the story was OK, but I didn't walk away from the story thinking "that was cool". So there was plenty to innovate around, plus the fact that we had some really interesting ideas around the dog and combat and drama. And I have to say and it's a bit of a strange thing to say, but I think I've learnt more about games design doing Fable II than any other game

One change from Fable to Fable

II is the inclusion of more "named" voice talent, Stephen Fry and others. What do you think bringing in those types of actors can add to a story driven game like Fable II?

Familiarity pays dividends, because it means people trust those people more. You go "Isn't that Stephen Fry? I liked him in that programme. He's a top bloke." So I don't have to do as much work as a designer to characterise him [laughs], so that's the first thing. The next thing is the actors in Fable II are fantastic because they are professional and they know what they are doing.

I have to admit, and I think some of these voices stayed in,

"I don't want people to play Fable II twice."

FABLE II



The fairer sex? Not necessarily. This time you can play as a female character, and even get pregnant, with all the physical changes that entails.

> Fable II continued

that there were a couple of voices in Fable 1 who were checkout girls at Tesco's [laughs]. You can't compare.

Did you find fitting Fable II onto one DVD or any of the Xbox 360's hardware restricting, or was it just far more liberating than the original Xbox?

Well, I'm sure I should tell you that the Xbox was wonderfully easy and we have everything we want, but of course being a developer, it doesn't matter what you give me we will fill it up to the very maximum. Not only is Fable II this vast open ended world, there's an enormous amount of AI going on. There's the AI of the dog, the economy of the world, there's characters that travel with you, there's the ability to bring in co-op players, there's all the LIVE stuff: we are pushing every aspect of the 360.

Can you tell us a little bit about the good and evil choices?

Well, it's pretty hard to describe that. In Fable 1 it was easy. I could just say you get horns or you get a halo, but in Fable II it goes a lot deeper than that. Yes, you can look more noble and light, or darker and with horns, but that's just the visual aspect. It's not just about what you

look like. It's the way the world treats you, the way people in the game treat you, the way your family treats you, the way your dog reacts... there's a list a mile long of things that changes because of your choices. It's not just about good and evil any more. It's how much are you willing to sacrifice.

Fable 1 was about kill this person, save that person. Fable II is more about making you think "well, what is the good thing to do here?" There's a tiny one in childhood, for example, where there's this girl who wants to elope... you've got to give this love

"We are pushing every aspect of the 360"

letter either to her to allow her to elope or to her mother to stop her. Now which is the good one there? Is it good to give it to the parent who is worried about their child, or should love be allowed to find a course? I think there are lots of times in the game like that where you will be asking yourself what is the right thing to do, and I like that.

We also measure purity and corruption – how you approach things, whether you overcharge for

items and cruelty and kindness. Now you might think being kind is being good, but no it's not. I'll give you a real life example. To my son every night I'm cruel to him because I make him go to bed, but I know that if I don't he'll get up cranky. I want people to finish Fable II and say "OK, I now know a little bit more about myself."

Are there ramifications in the world – if you're good you can only do one quest and if you're evil, there's a different one?

You're talking about branching. Yes, we do do branching. Sometimes the world branches. To give you an example from childhood. If you do a quest one way, the whole region changes. So there's not just good quests and evil quests, but entirely different regions with different people. I know Fable 1 was a game that a lot of people played twice, but because there is an element of drama missing second time around, it wasn't such a good game second time around. The funny thing is, I actually don't want people to play Fable II twice. I know that sounds very odd, but I've designed this game to be played once – in this unique way. A lot of the world works as a simulation, so people can continue to play and enjoy beyond the story. ●

FEATURE

Fable II Pub Games



Win money and items today!

Available on Xbox LIVE Arcade now for a mere 800 points, Fable II Pub Games allows you to win money and items for use in Fable II itself. So we've put together these tips and tricks which should hopefully ensure that your avatar is nicely in the black by the time October rolls around.



GENERAL TIPS

It pays to spend time unlocking the better tables, even if you end up having to borrow a fair bit in the meantime. The higher-limit tables offer a better chance of getting your money back, because wins are far bigger. Sure, if you risk a lot of money then you could well lose big too, but a few lucky hands should leave you in a healthy position. It's knowing when to quit that's the key!

Alternatively, you should try to enter the tournament – not only because you stand the chance of winning items that are unique to Pub Games – yes, some items aren't available anywhere in Albion – but also because chances are that you'll get out more than you put in. That's because money is added by the house to each game – so even if you don't win outright, there's a chance of making a tidy profit by the time you're out. Not only that, but you'll get a cash sum for finishing in the top five.

You're not forced to merge your Pub Games character with your Fable avatar – so if you end up down

on your luck, then simply keep the two separate. That way you can start out with a completely clean slate.



FORTUNE'S TOWER

This is almost certainly the best game to play to win most, as it's the most strategic of the three. Make sure you choose a deck with the lowest number of Number cards (56 rather than 70), as it increases the ratio of Hero cards to Number cards and therefore your odds marginally.

"Fortune's Tower is the best game to play to win"



It's often a good idea to cash out when the Gate Card is gone, to avoid risking a loss, particularly if you've bet big. Remember the Gate card is not a Get out of Jail free card – while it does offer some security, it can still cause a burn.

Don't risk all on doubles – you'll be in profit quite early, and it's sometimes tempting to go for broke for a big win, inevitably ending up in failure. Sometimes it's better to cash out on a small profit, while letting the NPCs risk all and lose.

It's tempting during tournaments especially to try and get your money back, leading to more risky play, but to win, you don't need to have more than you started with – just make sure you have more than your competitors. Keep an eye on their totals and bet accordingly. ➤

FABLE II

> Fable II continued

If you're way behind you'll have to try the odd risky bet, but if you're roughly even then play it safe – cash out as soon as you feel comfortable. Occasionally, the opponents will risk all for a jackpot and miss out.

If you make it to the final stage of a tournament, you're going to win something, so you can afford to take more chances. As long as you get to the final stage once in three, which is quite achievable, you'll be in profit even on ranking fifth on the top table. Finish higher and those odds increase further. When you have the money, play the high rollers' tables outside the tournament to win big.



KEYSTONE

Again, the odds are better at the higher-limit tables, and particularly in tournaments. Stick to the later tables once they're unlocked and you're more likely to profit. Remember to check the odds by pressing the left trigger, to remind yourself of the chances that each of your bets has of winning.

In the tournaments, it often pays to place low-odds, high-reward bets – as an example, put the arch bets on 3 and 18, then bet on all the individual triples, and finally the triple square. Keep doing this and you'll

lose a number of rounds, but when you win, you'll scoop a huge amount. Revert to safer bets (like 10 and 11 on the arch, and 4-9 and 12-17 squares for the inner bets) and you'll likely finish on top, or at least in the first three.

Don't bet against yourself. In other words, if you bet on a single number, make sure other bets correspond, so it's the same shape, colour, number range. Betting against yourself might mean you win something back, but overall it makes no sense as some of your bets have to lose.



SPINNERBOX

Again, it pays to play for a while, even if you're losing money.



Unlocking the later games is the secret to success, as the higher-limit games offer better odds once more.

Don't go looking for any specific tactics, as there's no way to affect your results at all. There's literally no way of influencing what will happen,

so just keep tapping A and hoping for the best.

From experience, the Cow and Corset spinnerbox (with the maximum bet of 250) seems to pay out slightly better than the others.



IN-GAME EFFECTS

Apart from the items you may or may not have won, your Fable II game can be affected by your performance in Pub Games, should you choose to merge your gambler with your Fable II avatar. Any debt you accrue will be outstanding with the Pub Games Masters which you can find within Albion's many public houses. Should you happen to owe too much money, you'll be considered a criminal, and will have to pay a fine or even do some community service! ●



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